



One Park Place | Suite 475 | Annapolis, MD 21401-3475
1-866-542-8163 | Fax: 410-837-0269
aarp.org/md | md@aarp.org | twitter: @aarpm
facebook.com/aarpm

SB 386 – Lower Bills and Local Power Act 2026
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 24, 2026
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee. My name is Sara Westrick, and I am the Advocacy Director for AARP Maryland and a resident of Anne Arundel County.

AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members across the state, making it one of the largest membership-based organizations advocating on behalf of older Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB386. We thank the Senate President for introducing this legislation on behalf of Maryland ratepayers.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their best lives as they age. Our work focuses on issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including affordable utilities, financial security, health care access, and protection from financial exploitation.

AARP Maryland supports Senate Bill 386 because it takes real steps to bring down costs for families, and honestly, we all need the help. Ratepayers don't have control over the power lines bringing electricity into neighborhoods or the way the grid is planned. But we do feel the impact every time we open our payment reminder. That's why this bill matters so much. It focuses on lowering electricity costs for everyday Marylanders.

Lower Costs for Ratepayers

Senate Bill 386 directs the state to modernize the grid using advanced technologies that make the system more efficient and reduce the congestion costs that ultimately show up on our monthly bills. It also requires electric companies to join a regional transmission organization, bringing more transparency and accountability to how grid decisions affect ratepayers. Most importantly, the bill sets aside up to \$100 million for one-time bill credits for residential customers by October 2026. For many people, even a one-time credit could be the difference between falling deeper behind and finally catching up.

More Reliable, Modern, Affordable Grid

Every time there's a storm or heatwave, Maryland's residents are the ones dealing with outage and all the invisible costs they incur, like spoiled groceries. SB 386 pushes utilities to plan for better, more modern grid technologies. These might be things like advanced power flow controls,

improved conductors, and dynamic line ratings, so the system can be more reliable and less costly over the long run. The bill also speeds up reviews for upgrading existing lines. When the grid is outdated, we pay the price. When the grid is efficient, we save. It's that simple.

The bill also directs the state to make better use of existing transportation rights-of-way for transmission and energy storage projects. That means fewer expensive, drawn-out siting fights and lower costs passed on to customers.

Why SB 386 Matters

AARP Maryland knows that our members and many senior Marylanders on fixed incomes are grappling with today's unaffordable utility bills. Tough budget decisions are being made to pay for utilities, and the negative consequences are many.

This bill focuses on reducing costs. It strengthens oversight. It modernizes the grid. It directs real financial relief to real people who need it. This isn't abstract policy but about whether we can keep the heat on without sacrificing everything else.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director at swestrick@arp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.