



*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

House Bill 1532 – Utility RELIEF Act

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment:

I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1532 – Utility RELIEF Act. At the beginning of this legislative session, I announced that energy affordability was the #1 issue on the minds of citizens in this State. Energy affordability is not unique to Maryland and will take regional and national solutions to solve, but I set out with one clear goal: to use every tool available to the State to lower costs, increase supply, and protect ratepayers without abandoning our commitment to clean energy.

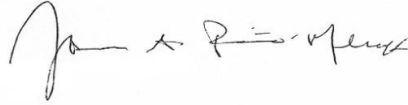
This bill is a culmination of a monthslong process that required many hard decisions, but has resulted in a package that I can confidently say reduces energy bills in the short term and long term. Between the Next Generation Energy Act last year and the Utility RELIEF Act this year, we have taken intentional steps to bring new generation in the State as quickly as possible while establishing extensive ratepayer protections.

There are a lot of really good policies and reforms in this bill, but in the interest of time I want to focus on the policies I believe will have the greatest impact on improving energy affordability for our citizens:

- **Multi-Year Rate Plan Reform:** By prohibiting forecast test years and allowing for one-way reconciliation we are ensuring the rate-setting process is grounded in actual costs and we are preventing inflated rate increases;
- **EmPower Program Changes:** To ensure that every Marylander's utility bill achieves cost savings in each of the next three years, we are temporarily reducing the scope of the utility-administered programs and using a portion of the Strategic Energy Investment Fund to pay down \$100 million of EmPower costs. Empower is an important program with significant long-term benefits, but it is a lever that can be pulled right now to reduce pressure on ratepayer bills;
- **Clean Energy Reverse Auction:** We will be using ACP funds from the SEIF to directly and quickly incentivize new generation at the lowest cost possible. The more generation brought online quickly will lead to reduced pressure on energy rates; and
- **Net Energy Metering Reform:** We will transition the Net Energy Metering Program to a more equitable compensation structure for excess solar power that customers generate and send to the grid and this change will save ratepayers money.

I urge the Committee to support this legislation to ensure that we provide immediate relief to ratepayers in the short term while best setting the State up to provide relief to ratepayers in the long term.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Peña-Melnyk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a distinct "A".

Delegate Peña-Melnyk