



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

February 19, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 373 - REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE -
WITHDRAWAL (RESTORING ENERGY FREEDOM ACT) - POSITION: UNFAVORABLE**

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

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 373 (SB 373).

With offices in every Maryland jurisdiction, DHS provides preventive and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment and career opportunities to help Marylanders reach their full potential. Through the Family Investment Administration (FIA), DHS administers critical energy assistance through the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) that would be significantly impacted by SB 373.

SB 373 would make electric bills significantly less affordable for over 165,000 Maryland households who currently receive electric utility assistance. If SB 373 is passed, the Governor would need to begin the process of withdrawal from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The withdrawal from RGGI, as proposed by SB 373, would dismantle the special funding for Maryland's Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) that supports Maryland's electric assistance programs. Without replacement funding, such as the use of general funds, DHS would be forced to significantly or abandon curtail electric utility assistance, leaving households in every county in Maryland vulnerable to electric shutoffs, summer heat emergencies, and persistent utility debt.

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RGGI auction proceeds go into SEIF, which acts as the primary funding source for both the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP), providing ongoing electric bill payment assistance to income-eligible households, and the Electric Arrearage Retirement Assistance (EARA) Program, which retires past-due electric balances to prevent service termination and restore utility service. In State Fiscal Year 2025, DHS issued approximately \$69 million in RGGI auction proceeds on electric bill assistance and arrearage relief. For more information about EUSP and EARA, please see our [briefing](#) from earlier in the legislative session.

Energy bill assistance is a core household-stabilization strategy. Reliable electric service is essential for heating and cooling, food storage, lighting, access to communication, and the operation of medical and assistive equipment. For low-income households, seniors, people with disabilities, and families with young children, energy assistance prevents shutoffs that pose serious health and safety risks, particularly during periods of extreme heat or cold. By reducing monthly bills and retiring arrearages, these programs help stabilize household finances, prevent the accumulation of unmanageable utility debt, support housing stability, and allow limited income to be directed toward other basic needs such as rent, food, childcare, and transportation. Stable utility service also enables employment, education, and participation in workforce training by ensuring households remain connected to the internet and other essential digital communication tools.

For these reasons, DHS respectfully urges the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 373. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony for the Committee's consideration. If additional information is needed, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López
Secretary