

**FAVORABLE – House Bill 1349**  
**Public Service Commission – Implementation Plan to Convert Formerly**  
**Operational Fossil Fuel Generating Stations**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**

Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc., (Columbia Gas) is a natural gas utility providing energy to more than 34,000 customers in Maryland's western counties of Allegany, Garrett and Washington, and we support House Bill 1349.

The legislation requires the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to develop an implementation plan to convert formerly operational fossil fuel electric generating stations in Maryland to natural gas generating stations. The legislation also requires the PSC to conduct a public stakeholder process to solicit input when developing an implementation plan.

This public policy idea would help address the issue of Maryland importing 40% of its electricity and allow the state to increase in-state electricity generation. It is widely reported Maryland is facing a critical electricity shortage due to surging demand, insufficient local generation, and transmission constraints, with PJM forecasting a 40% demand increase over the next 15 years.

In addition, the PJM region is currently facing significant challenges, including potential energy shortages by 2027 due to rapid demand growth from large load customers like data centers, which is driving a need for over 30 gigawatts of new capacity in the PJM region.

Converting old base load fossil fuel plants to run on natural gas offers operational and reliability benefits, economic benefits and the potential for lower Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emission generation in the future.

Modern natural gas combined-cycle power plants can reach thermal efficiencies of over 60%, compared to around 33% for the older plants meaning less fuel is needed to generate the same amount of electricity. In addition, natural gas plants can start up quickly and adjust their power output rapidly. This makes them an ideal complement to intermittent renewable energy sources like solar and wind, ensuring grid stability and reliability when the weather fluctuates.

Natural gas burns cleaner than other fossil fuels, which reduces wear and tear, corrosion, and fouling on boilers and other equipment. This results in less frequent maintenance and fewer forced outages compared to older plants.

Finally, new natural gas turbines can be retrofitted with carbon capture technology or modified to blend or eventually run on hydrogen or renewable natural gas as its supply becomes more viable, further reducing the plant's and Maryland's carbon footprint over time.

Public policy ideas to secure more electric generation in Maryland and the PJM region should be pursued to address Maryland's growing energy needs and lack of in-state electric generation. Columbia Gas believes the requirements of House Bill 1349 are appropriately and reasonably crafted policies related to new electric generation in the state of Maryland and requests a favorable report on the bill.

March 6, 2026

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