

**Organization:** JenesaisQuoi

**Position:** Support

**Bill:** House Bill 1561

**Committee:** House Environment and Transportation Committee

JenesaisQuoi respectfully submits this testimony **in support of House Bill 1561**, legislation that advances electric grid reliability, price stability, and long-term energy resilience for Maryland residents and businesses.

My name is Ari Lewis, and I am here today on behalf of JenesaisQuoi. Our mission is to establish sustainable systems for the future through the means of construction and agriculture. Energy price volatility has substantially increased over the past two years which has directly affected material pricing, workforce development, and business operation overhead. These pain points have a direct impact on the small businesses and employees' morale resulting in disproportionate burden on the working class of citizens leading to increased anxiety, increased health issues, and tremendous financial debt. Small businesses are a major driver for over 70% of net job increases in the state of Maryland. Also, Maryland is the top state for minority-owned businesses and launched the Maryland Community Business Compass to help all entrepreneurs find funding and resources to navigate challenges.

I am here to urge your support of HB 1561, the Affordable Energy Act, because Maryland is facing growing challenges and a near future crisis: the system is 6,600 megawatts short which equates roughly to 6 nuclear power plants. Electricity demand is growing rapidly due to technological advancement, data farm expansion (Amazon Quantum Loop project in Fedrick), Greater Baltimore Tech Hub designation, and affordable housing/ redevelopment (Reinvest Baltimore Action Plan) to mention a few.

As Maryland's economy continues to grow, the demand for electricity will exponentially increase due to artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous equipment, digital currency, and data farms. Without better strategic planning and stronger accountability, this growth will strain our aging electrical infrastructure eventually leading to rolling blackouts predicted for 2027.

With all this in mind, the swift adoption of House Bill 1561 will allow for a better quality of life, electric grid reliability, and long-term energy resilience. So lets take action now and be proactive, instead of being reactive after experiencing a crisis. Thank you for your time and your consideration.