

Testimony on HB 1561 – Affordable Energy Act

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and members of the Committee. My name is **Sekwan Merritt**, and I am the owner of **Lightning Electric**, a minority-owned electrical contracting company based in Baltimore City.

I support HB 1561 because this issue is not theoretical for me. It is personal, it is professional, and it is happening in real time.

As an electrical contractor, I deal every day with the pressure of keeping projects moving, keeping crews working, managing suppliers, and trying to maintain cash flow while still delivering quality work. When energy costs rise and reliability becomes uncertain, that pressure hits small businesses like mine first and hardest. It increases costs, creates delays, disrupts planning, and makes it even harder for minority-owned contractors to stay ahead.

That speaks directly to my experience right now.

My company has had to fight through real financial strain while still trying to protect payroll, keep vendors satisfied, and keep active jobs alive. When the system is unstable, businesses like mine feel it first. We are the ones trying to hold everything together while also creating jobs and opportunities in the communities that need them most.

That is why HB 1561 matters.

This legislation provides a more effective pathway for Maryland to improve energy reliability and affordability

From where I stand, that means more than policy language. It means a better chance for stable projects, better planning, and more confidence for businesses trying to grow and hire.

And for my community, this is also about opportunity.

When Maryland invests in energy infrastructure, generation, and storage, that creates real work for electricians, contractors, apprentices, and suppliers. It creates a pipeline for workforce development. It opens doors for young people, returning citizens, and people from underserved communities who need access to real careers, not just temporary jobs.

For me, workforce development is not just a talking point. It is part of the work I am trying to build every day. I know what it means to come from a community where opportunity feels limited. I also know what it means when the trades provide a real path forward. Reliable and affordable energy can support not only economic growth, but also community growth.

I urge this committee to give HB 1561 a favorable report because affordable and reliable energy does not just power buildings. It powers businesses, families, and futures.