



**Bill:** HB 958- Natural Gas – Connection and Line Extension – Discounts and Payment Plans

**Position:** Support

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Energy Solutions, I write to express our strong support for **House Bill 958**, which would prohibit the Public Service Commission from adopting or enforcing any regulation or order that restricts a public service company from offering discounts or payment plans for natural gas line connections and line extensions.

In our view, this legislation advances those principles for the following reasons:

**1. Protects Energy Affordability for Families and Small Businesses**

Natural gas remains a critical and affordable energy choice for Maryland residents and businesses. Policies that limit options for discounts and flexible payment plans threaten to raise connection costs, potentially placing additional financial burdens on customers who are already struggling with high energy bills. A policy that preserves the ability of utilities to offer discounts and payment plans aligns with broader goals of keeping energy costs manageable for Marylanders.

**2. Maintains Customer Choice and Market Flexibility**

A one-size-fits-all approach to regulating line extensions or service offerings can inadvertently limit customer choice. By ensuring that utilities can continue to tailor programs that meet customer needs, whether through negotiated discounts, extended payment terms, or other options, this bill supports a competitive and adaptable energy marketplace in Maryland.

**3. Supports Reliability and System Sustainability**

Access to reliable energy infrastructure, including natural gas service where customers choose it, is key to community stability and economic competitiveness.

For these reasons, we support HB 958.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Peters  
Executive Director