



TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation

DATE: February 24, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

BILL: HB 950

The Maryland Municipal League stands in strong support of House Bill 950, the County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act, as it empowers local governments with long-overdue control over critical public infrastructure, our streetlighting systems. This legislation addresses persistent, well-documented struggles that Maryland’s cities and towns have faced for years in managing street lighting, an essential public safety resource that greatly affects the well-being and quality of life for our residents.

For decades, municipalities throughout Maryland have been burdened by a system where the ownership and management of street lighting equipment has resided almost exclusively with utility companies. This has led to a complicated and often adversarial relationship. Municipal officials routinely face challenges ranging from inefficient maintenance schedules and slow repair responses to inflexible contract terms and opaque pricing structures. At times, even minor requests for upgrades to more efficient lighting technologies or improved servicing have led to lengthy negotiations, bureaucratic hurdles, or outright denials. Municipalities have had to cope with unexpected rate increases, minimal choice over contractors, and little opportunity to incorporate innovation or sustainability measures due to the constraints of utility-owned infrastructure.

Our member municipalities have repeatedly attempted to work in partnership with utility companies to modernize their communities’ lighting systems, *asking for upgrades to LED lights, more responsive repair services, or cost-saving account structures. Too often, these reasonable requests have been met with delays, a lack of transparency around costs, and a glaring lack of meaningful leverage. In several cases across the state, utility companies have insisted on purchase prices well above the true depreciated value of the assets, further impeding municipal ownership transitions. Even when municipalities sought to negotiate as prudent stewards of public funds, the process frequently left them paying inflated rates, beholden to maintenance delays, and unable to plan for long-term energy or climate goals. These frustrations have become a recurring theme in our dialogues with members, echoed in nearly every region of Maryland.

The adverse consequences for local governments are clear. Residents are left without timely repairs, local budgets are strained by persistent overcharges, and opportunities for technological innovation are lost. Worse still, local governments, those most accountable to the public for safe, well-lit streets, have their hands tied, unable to provide the responsive service and public safety that their constituents expect and deserve. This bill

MML represents 161 local governments and about 2 million Maryland residents.

provides the clarity and fairness that Maryland's municipalities have so desperately needed. By establishing a clear right for local governments to purchase or, if necessary, condemn street lighting equipment at a fair, regulated price (the net book value), this legislation removes one of the main avenues for dispute. It establishes robust guidelines for transitioning maintenance and service, and most importantly, gives municipalities the ability to control, innovate, and deliver for their communities. With the framework provided in this bill, cities and towns will finally be able to transition to energy-efficient lighting, reduce their carbon footprint, and realize significant cost savings, just as municipalities in other states have done to great success. The bill's approach also ensures that any remaining disagreements can be swiftly resolved by the Public Service Commission, protecting both municipal interests and the utilities' right to fair compensation.

House Bill 950 ensures local officials can be fully accountable stewards of their communities' public safety and financial resources. It represents an end to a long and often frustrating era of bureaucratic back-and-forth that has hindered progress for Maryland's municipalities. The Maryland Municipal League strongly urges a favorable report on HB 950, so that our member cities and towns can at last deliver safe, cost-effective, and innovative lighting solutions for all Marylanders.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

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