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HB 54 - Task Force to Study Restructuring Maryland's Electric Utility Industry
Environment and Transportation Committee
February 3, 2026
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. My name is Laurel Peltier, and I am a proud member of AARP Maryland and a resident of Baltimore County. AARP Maryland represents more than 850,000 members across the state, making it one of the largest membership-based organizations advocating for older Marylanders. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 54. We thank Delegate Allen for introducing this important legislation on behalf of Maryland ratepayers.

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to live their best lives as they age. Our work focuses on issues that matter most to older adults and their families, including affordable utilities, financial security, health care access, and protection from financial exploitation.

Older Marylanders, like all utility customers, deserve fair and just rates, free from hidden or unnecessary expenses.

The issues that the HB 54 Task Force wants to address are as follows:

- Maryland is not seeing benefits from being in the PJM Regional Transmission Organization (RTO). Since 2020, the primary issue has been that higher payments to power generators have NOT incentivized new power plant construction.
- On several occasions, the PJM organization has supported proceedings where Maryland rate payers fund projects that do not benefit Maryland consumers and businesses. One example is paying for a transmission line to serve Virginia data centers in Virginia.
- In this PJM RTO structure, there has not been a planning backstop or central planning role for the last 5-6 years of unprecedented data center load requirements and the needed transmission growth. The risk has been borne squarely by PJM ratepayers.

HB 54 offers an organized statewide approach to studying various utility models and their pros and cons, and to developing a list of the many changes that would need to happen to restructure Maryland's Electric Utility Industry.

AARP Maryland offers one suggestion: The Task Force could include outside energy consultants and experts. Many lessons were learned after Maryland implemented the original restructuring

law, the 1999 Electric Choice Act, with the first being that restructuring is highly technical and complicated.

These are unusual times for Maryland's older adults, as many find the current electricity and gas rates truly unaffordable. The health and safety of our seniors have been negatively impacted as they scramble to pay for utilities to avoid terminations and keep the power on. AARP Maryland recommends that Maryland focus on finding long-term solutions so that residents' home energy will become affordable soon.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to support HB 54.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Westrick, AARP Maryland Advocacy Director at swestrick@aarp.org or by calling 410-310-0374.