

**INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS
LOCAL UNION 96**

**5627 ALLENTOWN ROAD
SUITE 202
SUITLAND, MD 20746
OFFICE-240-619-3151 FAX-240-619-3168
EMAIL- TEAMSTERS96@COMCAST.NET**



**Testimony of Wilder Reed, President, Teamsters Local 96
Regarding HB 1253 – “Break STRIDE Act”
March 10, 2026**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Wilder Reed, and I am the President of Teamsters Local 96. I have lived in Maryland for 23 years, raised my eight children here in Anne Arundel County, and proudly represent nearly 1000 hardworking men and women who keep Maryland’s natural gas system operating safely every day. I am here to express our strong opposition to HB 1253, known as the “Break STRIDE Act,” because it threatens the safety of our communities, the reliability of the energy system Maryland depends on, and the livelihoods of the workers like myself who maintain it.

The STRIDE program was established in 2013 as Maryland’s response to a nationwide call from the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration urging states to accelerate the replacement of aging, leak-prone natural gas pipelines. STRIDE has worked exactly as intended: replacing old cast iron, bare steel pipes as it ages, ensuring that Maryland families are protected. Between 2019 and 2024, leaks on the Maryland natural gas system dropped by more than 41 percent, thanks directly to STRIDE-supported modernization work. Those gains were made possible because trained union workers were on the ground every day rebuilding the system from the bottom up.

For our members, this legislation directly threatens hundreds of jobs. These are good-paying careers with apprenticeship pipelines, family-supporting wages, and benefits that allow men and women to raise their families in dignity. When STRIDE stops, that work disappears.

Our members know firsthand what is at stake. They are the ones called out at midnight in freezing temperatures to address critical work that STRIDE helps prevent. They are the ones who see the corroded pipes come out of the ground and replace them with modern infrastructure built to last decades. And they are the ones who will lose stable employment if this legislature cuts off the very program designed to keep this work moving.

Maryland cannot afford to undermine the safety of its energy system, nor can it afford to push skilled jobs out of the state. The Break STRIDE Act puts both at risk. On behalf of the men and women of Teamsters Local 96, and the families, businesses, and communities that rely on safe, reliable natural gas service, I urge you to oppose this harmful piece of legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Wilder Reed

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Wilder Reed, President of Teamsters Local 96