

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Delegate Marc Korman, Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce, with almost 700 member organizations representing over 40,000 employees, supports HB 958, legislation that would prevent the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) from prohibiting natural gas utilities providing Line Extension Allowances (LEA's), as proposed in a regulation in 2025. The proposed LEA prohibition by the PSC will require new gas utility customers in Maryland to bear the full upfront cost of extending natural gas service to them.

For decades, Maryland utilities, both electric and gas, have used long-standing and cost-effective practices to help extend service to new homes, businesses, and communities, which is a vital part of economic development in Washington County and Maryland. The natural gas utility LEA's are critically important in communities where the up-front cost of natural gas infrastructure would otherwise put energy access and choice out of reach for consumers.

Under existing LEA policies in Maryland and throughout the United States, the costs of extending natural gas infrastructure are shared among customers, making new connections feasible for businesses and homeowners alike. The proposed PSC regulation would instead require individual customers to pay the full cost upfront, making access to natural gas financially out of reach for many. The proposed PSC regulation would adversely affect gas utilities by prohibiting them from providing LEA's, but allow electric utilities to continue to provide LEA's.

The proposed PSC regulation change would significantly discourage business growth and development, particularly for small businesses, manufacturers, restaurants, homeowners, and developers in Washington County and Maryland who depend on predictable and affordable energy. The PSC's proposed LEA prohibition regulation would adversely affect housing affordability as well. Higher energy costs will translate into higher prices, slower economic and housing development, and reduced job growth throughout Washington County and Maryland.

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce strongly supports the continued use of, and affordable access to, natural gas in our county and in the state of Maryland. Natural gas has been and continues to be a vital energy source for Washington County and Maryland businesses.

We respectfully urge the Maryland General Assembly to preserve the existing line-extension framework in Maryland, maintaining affordability and reliability, and protecting access to essential energy services that support Maryland's economic vitality.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and we respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 958.

Sincerely,



Paul Frey, IOM  
President & CEO

**GROWTH.  
COMMUNITY.  
SUCCESS.**

