

MARYLAND RETAILERS ALLIANCE

The Voice of Retailing in Maryland



HB 958 Natural Gas—Connection and Line Extension—Discounts and Payment Plans

February 27, 2026

Position: Favorable

HB 958 provides a simple but important clarification to Maryland law: it prohibits the [Maryland Public Service Commission](#) from adopting or enforcing a regulation or order that prevents a public service company from offering a discount or payment plan to assist a customer with the cost of connecting to, or extending, a natural gas line to their property. This legislation is about flexibility, affordability, and fairness.

For many Maryland homeowners and small businesses, the upfront cost of connecting to an existing natural gas main—or extending a line to reach their property—can be a significant financial barrier. Even when natural gas service would lower long-term energy costs, improve efficiency, or replace older fuel sources, the initial installation expense can put access out of reach.

HB 958 does not mandate discounts. It does not require subsidies. It does not shift costs automatically to other ratepayers. Instead, it simply ensures that utilities are permitted to voluntarily offer structured discounts or payment plans to make connections more manageable and affordable.

Allowing utilities to offer payment plans spreads upfront infrastructure costs over time—much like other capital investments customers routinely finance. This can:

- Reduce the financial burden on families and small businesses;
- Encourage orderly and planned system expansion;
- Improve customer participation in utility infrastructure already in the ground;
- Provide utilities with predictable cost recovery rather than forcing customers to decline service altogether.

Importantly, prohibiting utilities from offering these flexible arrangements limits innovation and consumer choice. Utilities should be allowed to structure connection terms that reflect market conditions, local development needs, and customer demand—subject, of course, to the Commission’s broader oversight authority.

HB 958 strikes an appropriate balance. It preserves regulatory authority while ensuring that the Commission cannot categorically prohibit voluntary discounts or payment arrangements that expand access to service.

In a time when affordability remains a top concern for Maryland households, we should be removing unnecessary barriers to utility access—not reinforcing them. This bill promotes practical flexibility without imposing mandates.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 958.

Thank you for your consideration.