



March 10, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair
The Honorable Michele Guyton, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 and 251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Testimony of Julio Palomo, President & Assistant Business Manager of the
Philadelphia/Baltimore/Washington Laborers' District Council on
HB 1253: Gas Companies – Infrastructure Investments – Cost Recovery and Customer Notification
Position: UNFAVORABLE**

Thank you Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1253. My name is Julio Palomo. I am the President and Assistant Business Manager of Philadelphia/ Baltimore/ Washington Laborers' District Council. We are an affiliate of LiUNA – the Laborers' International Union of North America.

LiUNA strongly opposes HB 1253. We have more than 5,000 members who live and work in Maryland. And more than a thousand of our members work on contracted-out gas pipeline replacement projects for BGE, Washington Gas, and Columbia Gas. Pipe replacement programs like STRIDE are critical to ensuring the safety of our communities. It is bizarre that these important life-safety programs have become the target of a political crusade, but politics does not change the fact that the STRIDE program protects lives and property.

The purpose of STRIDE is to keep buildings from exploding. The STRIDE Program began during the Presidency of Barack Obama when his Administration's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration ("PHMSA") issued a Call-to-Action for Accelerated pipe replacement programs that have dedicated funding mechanisms. In making this Call-To-Action, PHMSA was motivated by a series gas pipeline accidents in San Bruno, California, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Allentown, Pennsylvania that all occurred in 2010 and 2011 and which involved the terrible loss of life and property that occurs when inadequate attention is paid to the integrity of pipeline infrastructure.

The ongoing need for STRIDE was demonstrated just two weeks ago. On February 27, 2026, there was a gas explosion in Beltsville Maryland. One Maryland resident was hospitalized, but fortunately, no one was killed. This explosion is a reminder that Maryland's aging gas infrastructure remains dangerous and needs to be repaired to avoid tragedy.

If HB 1253 is adopted, it would cause many more disasters like the explosion in Beltsville. HB 1253 would command gas companies to leave leaky, corroded pipes in the ground for two years before they could be replaced. If the General Assembly passes HB 1253, then in the future every time a gas line explodes, any legislator who votes for it will have to answer to the public as to why they passed a law that prohibited a gas company from fixing that pipe before it could be replaced.

HB 1253 proposes a reckless policy that endangers real lives. It also endangers jobs. HB 1253 is a job-killing bill that will tie up the gas infrastructure construction industry in bureaucratic notice requirements that will make most construction infeasible. Hundreds of LIUNA members will lose their jobs, and the gas distribution system in Maryland will become increasingly more dangerous.

In sum, this bill is bad policy. There are many better ways to advance renewable energy in ways that do not endanger Maryland residents nor kill good, family-supporting union jobs. For these reasons, LiUNA urges the committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1253.