

Testimony in support of HB 950

To: Marc Korman, Chair
& members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

RE: Support for HB 950 Public Utilities—Street Lighting Equipment—Acquisitions and Reporting
(County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act)

From: Sarah Efird Stephens, Councilmember, Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase

Thank you for this opportunity to address the ENT Committee. I am the elected Councilmember responsible for Buildings and Roads. The need for modernized street lighting in our community was a major factor in my decision to run for this position. I regularly hear from residents that updated lighting would increase our pedestrian safety, deter crime and be better for the environment. Section 3 has been trying to purchase our own street lights since 2009, two years after the legislature voted to allow municipalities and counties to own their own street lights. We have had a lighting designer help us get rid of a number of dark spots, and we have investigated and plan to use dimmers despite the fact that Pepco refuses to include a tariff formula for pre-programmed dimmers. We are ready to move forward but Pepco has stymied our efforts.

While there was a hiatus during that 17 year period to concentrate on reliability issues in terms of Pepco's service to our community, it is accurate to say that Pepco has not been a willing partner in our quest to own our own street lights.

Since 2022, when the Public Service Commission came to the aid of local entities, Pepco has indeed stepped up efforts to come to consensus on master sales agreements and third party pole attachment agreements. However we — and all the municipalities and counties in Pepco's service area — need the Assembly's help in getting across the finish line.

We have experienced a demonstrable lack of urgency in nailing down final agreements so we can proceed. Often questions crucial to the process are left unanswered by Pepco. For example, we need to determine net book value of the old lights we have to purchase from Pepco under the law. To do that, we need to determine the vintage of the lights and brackets of the current High Pressure Sodium lights in our community. Pepco will not give us a definitive answer as to what percentage of lights need to be looked at in our jurisdiction to make that calculation. We have not received an answer and were in fact told by a Pepco official that "legal" would likely **NOT** give us an answer despite our need for a number in order to enter a contract.

You have heard that there are 66,000 lights in this service area. We are eager to reduce both our energy footprint and the cost of lighting — and provide adequate, modernized streetlights in our community. We need your assistance in passing this bill so we are not forced to buy goods or services not necessary to the safe, efficient installation of new streetlights. Please either designate the Public Service Commission as mediator or legislate a condemnation proceeding-for all our future negotiations with Pepco. We ask that you vote for this bill to make it easier for your municipal and county constituents who choose to do so, to purchase, install and maintain new energy efficient lighting.