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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Agriculture and Aquaculture

Energy

Environment

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 24, 2026

Testimony in Favor of HB950
Public Utilities – Street Lighting Equipment – Acquisitions and Reporting
(County and Municipal Street Lighting Investment Act)

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I respectfully request a favorable report of House Bill 950 to streamline the process for local governments considering acquiring and maintaining utility-owned overhead street lights, thereby strengthening existing Maryland law. Local governments are often saddled with large payments to utility companies to operate streetlights, even though the lights are old, broken, and inefficient. HB950 would close loopholes in the law and make it easier for local governments to purchase and operate their own streetlights, resulting in efficiency upgrades and better management practices.

For many municipalities and counties, street lighting is their largest energy expense, and yet it is also one of the most basic and tangible services that directly impacts constituents. Under utility management, street light repairs are often delayed and technology is outdated, resulting in higher costs for the ratepayers. Conversion of utility-owned street lighting to customer-owned lighting is proven to improve service, reduce costs, and is recommended as a best practice following the 2020 Maryland Energy Administration Report on LED Streetlight Conversions.

Since the 2007 law was passed enabling local governments to acquire streetlights, very few jurisdictions have been able to successfully do just that because of various hurdles and roadblocks implemented by some utility companies. Notably, the 2023 version of the bill passed the House and sponsor amendments since then reflect negotiations between municipalities and utility companies. This bill will clarify existing law, lay out the cost of purchasing street lights, define the actual equipment that would be included in the purchase, and establish further guardrails to ensure that utilities cannot put up unnecessary hurdles to prevent the purchase.

While there is currently a proceeding pending at the Public Service Commission related to this issue in the PEPCO service area, this legislation would provide finality on the issue and ensure that there is a Statewide remedy moving forward.

Once again I respectfully request a favorable report of House Bill 950 to keep Marylanders out of the dark by strengthening the ability of local governments to acquire, operate, and maintain their own street lights.