

Testimony in Support of House Bill 974

Freedom From Monopolies Act – Choice & Consumer Protection Reform of 2026 Environment and Transportation Committee

Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present **House Bill 974 -the Freedom From Monopolies Act.**

This legislation addresses a simple but important principle:

Maryland consumers deserve both energy choice and strong consumer protections.

Over the past decade, Maryland has steadily restricted the competitive retail energy market. Today, many of the rules in place effectively make it impossible for suppliers to offer innovative products to residential customers. As a result, Maryland families have fewer options, less innovation, and ultimately less competition in the energy marketplace.

HB974 restores that balance.

The bill removes outdated restrictions that currently prevent suppliers from offering common pricing structures—such as indexed pricing, time-of-use plans, and other innovative energy products—while simultaneously strengthening consumer protections to ensure transparency and fairness.

HOUSE BILL 974 Changes

Importantly, this legislation does **not** eliminate consumer safeguards. In fact, it strengthens them.

HB974 requires:

- Clear written disclosure of contract terms, pricing structures, and fees
- A standardized **Energy Facts Label** so customers can easily compare plans
- A **10-day right of rescission** allowing consumers to cancel enrollment without penalty
- Stronger **anti-slamming protections**, including third-party verification for telephonic enrollments
- Strict rules prohibiting suppliers from impersonating utilities
- Data privacy protections preventing the sale of customer usage data without consent
- Safeguards for low-income customers and protections if a supplier exits the market.

HOUSE BILL 974 Changes

In short, **HB974 restores competition while modernizing consumer protection standards.**

Competition works best when consumers are informed and markets are transparent. By requiring standardized disclosures and empowering the Public Service Commission to investigate unfair pricing practices, this bill ensures that consumers have the information they need to make smart choices while regulators retain strong oversight authority.

HOUSE BILL 974 Changes

At the same time, we should recognize that monopolies—no matter how well intended—rarely serve consumers well in the long run. Innovation, price competition, and new product offerings come from markets where companies compete to earn a customer's business.

This bill allows Maryland to move back toward a **competitive energy marketplace**, while ensuring that bad actors cannot exploit consumers.

Ultimately, **HB974 is about trust.**

Trusting Maryland consumers with choice.

Trusting markets to innovate.

And ensuring government provides strong, clear rules that protect customers.

For those reasons, I respectfully ask for a **favorable report on House Bill 974.**

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.