



**HoCoClimateAction.org**  
Howard County, Maryland

**Testimony:** [HB0521](#) – Electric Companies and Gas Companies - Customer Bill Surcharge - Repeal  
**Hearing Date:** February 17, 2026  
**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Chisholm  
**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Submitting:** Liz Feighner for Howard County Climate Action  
**Position:** UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Committee Members,

[HoCo Climate Action](#) is a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. We are also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). Our organization works with residents and ally organizations to promote a safe climate and clean energy future. Specifically, we have worked extensively on building electrification to help Maryland achieve its ambitious climate goals, including net-zero emissions.

We urge you to vote UNFAVORABLY on [HB0521](#) – **Electric Companies and Gas Companies - Customer Bill Surcharge - Repeal**, which would repeal the EmPOWER program which was created to incentivize energy efficiency and conservation efforts. EmPOWER includes utility run programs of rebates, weatherizations and other efficiency updates, as well as similar programs targeted at limited income consumers

Stopping EmPOWER means families and businesses lose energy-saving rebates and incentives that reduce utility bills and demand on the electrical grid. Reduced demand saves everyone money. As outlined in [Maryland PIRG Foundation's 2023 report](#), energy efficiency is one of the smartest investments the state can make. The Clean Energy Advantage Loan Program (CEA) operates with funding through EmPOWER funds. If the surcharges are repealed, the CEA Loan Program loses funding and the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC) opposes this legislation.

Ending the EmPOWER program will drive already high energy bills higher. In 2024 alone, EmPOWER resulted in 307,150 MWh in electricity savings including incentives for weatherization and efficiency appliances and behavioural changes. EmPOWER is fundamentally an energy conservation program. It reduces energy use and the need for new transmission and generation.

For these reasons, we **oppose HB0521** and recommend a **UNFAVORABLE** report.

Howard County Climate Action  
Submitted by Liz Feighner, Steering and Advocacy Committee  
[www.HoCoClimateAction.org](http://www.HoCoClimateAction.org)  
[HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com](mailto:HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com)