



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

House Bill 521 - Electric Companies and Gas Companies - Customer Bill Surcharge - Repeal

Position: Oppose
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Date: February 17, 2026
From: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **OPPOSES** HB 521.

Bill Summary

House Bill 521 is an emergency measure that would repeal customer surcharges found on residential electric and gas utility bills. Currently, these surcharges are used to fund energy efficiency programs, such as EmPOWER Maryland. By repealing portions of the Public Utilities and State Government Articles, the bill would stop companies from recovering the costs of these environmental initiatives directly from ratepayers. Furthermore, the legislation would remove requirements for utility providers having to disclose certain debt repayment information related to these programs on customer statements.

Position Rationale

House Bill 521 would defund critical energy efficiency programs at a time when ensuring energy affordability and security is crucial for our Maryland business and residents. Energy efficiency programs, such as EmPOWER, have successfully reduced energy costs for ratepayers and lowered the costs associated with residential equipment operation and maintenance.

Investing in energy efficiency remains one of the most cost-effective strategies for reducing energy expenses. The EmPOWER energy efficiency and conservation programs incorporate many requirements to ensure verifiable outcomes, including those related to greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions across customer classes, cost-effectiveness, job creation, and consideration of ratepayer impacts. In 2023, the Public Service Commission estimated that EmPOWER had saved 16,441,741 megawatt-hours (MWh) of total energy and 3,231 megawatts (MW) of peak demand. This is equivalent to reducing 11.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and GHG emission from over 2.7 million vehicles driven or over 2.2 million homes' energy use for one year. As a result, for every \$1 invested in EmPOWER, Marylanders save \$2.

Finally, at a time of uncertainty surrounding energy costs, removing the requirement for utility providers to disclose the savings yielded by the energy efficiency program would undermine transparency and accountability for Maryland residents.

Accordingly, MDE asks for an **UNFAVORABLE** report for **HB 521**.

Contact: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations
Cell: 443-931-0937, Email: jeremy.baker@maryland.gov