

February 11, 2026

Testimony on HB 509
Campaign Finance – Contributions by Gas and Electric Utility Companies – Prohibition
Government, Labor, and Elections

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland is in favor of HB 509, which would prohibit gas and electric utility companies who do business in the state from making contributions to the campaigns of candidates for nonfederal State office.

Since the disastrous Citizens United decision and its progeny, Americans across the nation have resented the ever-growing influence of corporations and the wealthy within our political systems. The Maryland legislature has made significant efforts to ensure transparency and clear boundaries in our campaign finance system, but in a world where money becomes more and more influential with each campaign cycle, it's time to take it a step further by prohibiting corporate contributions altogether.

We know that utility companies are already spending millions of dollars to lobby within the state – and the fact that gas and electric utilities operate under a state-granted monopoly in Maryland makes this a sticky political situation rife for corruption, or the appearance of corruption. Banning campaign contributions from utility corporations and their political action committees is a step towards limiting their overall influence on our elections and helping to restore Maryland voters' trust in our political systems.

A prohibition on corporate contributions is not a novel idea: twenty-three other states already ban any and all donations by corporations, and utility campaign contributions were banned federally at all levels of government until 2005. This reform would help ensure that utility companies are not able to exert undue influence within our legislature.

HB 509 is a strong, simple, and effective solution to this problem that we can implement at the state level. For these reasons, we request a favorable report on HB 509.