



February 11, 2026

**GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE  
HB 509 – Campaign Finance – Contributions by Gas and Electric**

**Statement in Opposition**

Chesapeake Utilities of Maryland, Inc. (“Chesapeake”) provides natural gas distribution to approximately 33,000 customers on Maryland's Eastern Shore, including Cecil, Dorchester, Caroline, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties. Chesapeake respectfully **OPPOSES** HB 509, which would prohibit gas and electric utilities operating in the state from making campaign contributions to candidates or campaign finance entities influencing non-federal public office elections.

**HB 509 is discriminatory.** HB 509 unnecessarily targets utility companies by imposing a blanket prohibition on a single, highly regulated industry, while allowing other corporate, labor, and special-interest entities to participate in Maryland’s transparent campaign finance system. It is simply unfair to prohibit utilities from making campaign contributions while allowing such contributions from other highly regulated industries in the State (e.g., hospitals, insurance companies).

**HB 509 aims to limit free speech rights.** Respectfully, HB 509 appears to be aimed at limiting the free speech rights of public service companies in relation to their interactions with elected officials and government personnel. It is important for public service companies to interact with elected officials and provide feedback on legislation and other matters that directly impact utility ratepayers (who also happen to be constituents). Since current Maryland regulations prohibit public utilities from recovering any political contribution or lobbying expenses – it is unclear what benefit (if any) is gained by excluding public utilities from making campaign contributions.

While Chesapeake supports transparency, ethical practices, and public trust in elections, HB 509 is unnecessary, inequitable, and counterproductive. It unfairly isolates an already highly regulated industry, limits access to expert policy input, and may create unintended consequences for Maryland’s energy future.

On behalf of Chesapeake and our thousands of employees and their families who contribute every day in the communities where they live, work, and serve, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB 509.

Chesapeake Utilities Corporation  
Steve Baccino, Governmental Affairs Director  
Contact: sbaccino@chpk.com