

FAVORABLE – Senate Bill 482
Interference With Critical Infrastructure or a Public Safety Answering Point
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Columbia Gas of Maryland, Inc. (Columbia) supports SB 482 as introduced. The legislation amends Maryland law to prohibit a person from intentionally, willfully, and without authorization interrupting or impairing the functioning of critical infrastructure, which includes natural gas utility equipment, facilities and pipelines. Under the proposed legislation, a person who denies access, interrupts or impairs the functioning of critical infrastructure is guilty of a felony and subject to imprisonment or a fine or both.

Columbia supports public policies protecting its equipment, facilities and pipelines from attack or interference. Ensuring we can safely and reliably provide energy to our customers is our priority. Columbia works with industry, federal and state agencies and organizations to develop standards and best practices to manage cybersecurity risks and to promote the protection of our critical infrastructure.

Unfortunately, there have been attacks on utility facilities and infrastructure. These attacks can be carried out by various actors including terrorists, extremist groups, disgruntled individuals, nation-states seeking to destabilize a region, or criminals aiming to disrupt operations for personal gain.

Examples include shooting incidents at power substations in the United States where individuals have targeted electrical substations with gunfire, causing power outages. There has also been vandalism of energy infrastructure where unknown actors have deliberately damaged electrical equipment or transformers.

Data from Check Point Research indicates U.S. utilities faced a near 70% jump in cyber-attacks in 2024 from 2023, underlining the escalating threats to critical infrastructure. Power infrastructure across the U.S. is becoming increasingly vulnerable as the grid expands rapidly to meet surging demand for power and assets are digitalized.

In addition, in October 2024 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) highlighted in its 2025 Homeland Threat Assessment (HTA) that domestic and foreign adversaries are almost certain to continue posing threats to the integrity of the nation's critical infrastructure over the next year. This is partly because they believe that targeting these sectors could have widespread effects on U.S. industries and the standard of living.

Mitigating attacks and interference with critical infrastructure is a joint effort between at-risk industries and federal, state and local governments. Legislation such as SB 482 can assist in the possible prevention of future attacks and interference of critical infrastructure.

Columbia believes the requirements of Senate Bill 482 are appropriately and reasonably crafted policies related to the protection of Maryland's critical infrastructure and supports the legislation as introduced.

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