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Calvert and Prince George's Counties

Environment and Transportation
Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

HB0556 authorizes local governments to offer a property tax credit to homeowners who spend at least 25 percent of their household net income on utility services. This bill does not mandate a statewide program. Instead, it provides flexibility and local control, allowing counties and municipalities to tailor relief in a way that best meets the needs of their communities.

As we deliberate on this bill, it is important that we consider the real and growing burden that essential utility expenses place on households across our state. Electricity, gas, water, and internet usage are foundational to daily life, yet for many families these costs now consume a significant share of monthly income, even when household usage remains stable.

Consider a senior homeowner living on a fixed income who has remained current on mortgage and property tax obligations. Rising electricity and water costs may force difficult tradeoffs between utilities, medication, and food. Over time, this pressure can lead to arrears, debt accumulation, and increased housing risk. The *Maryland Family Utility Tax Relief Act* allows local governments to intervene with targeted relief before those outcomes occur.

Similarly, a working family with children may experience seasonal or market-driven utility increases that unexpectedly consume a quarter or more of take-home pay. Even households that are otherwise financially stable can be destabilized by sustained utility cost increases. This bill recognizes that reality and provides an option for early, preventative assistance.

HB0556 is deliberately narrow and fiscally responsible. Eligibility is clearly defined, relief is limited to households experiencing a measurable utility burden, and program design, including the amount and duration of any credit, remains entirely within local control. This structure ensures accountability while allowing flexibility in implementation.

At its core, this legislation is about stability. By addressing utility burden through targeted property tax relief, HB0556 helps families remain in their homes, reduces the risk of displacement, and acknowledges that utility affordability is directly connected to housing security.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report** on House Bill 0556. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Truly Yours,

Jeffrie E. Long, Jr.
Delegate Jeffrie E. Long, Jr.