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HB0928 (SB0603) Public Service Commission - Electricity and Gas Suppliers - Training and Educational Program
Favorable
House Economic Matters Committee
February 20th, 2020

Good Afternoon Chairman Davis and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan. I am the Director of Advocacy for AARP MD. AARP Maryland is one of the largest membership-based organizations in the Free State, encompassing almost 900,000 members. **AARP MD supports HB 928 Residential Electricity and Gas Supply Billing Information – Reports.**

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

HB 928 requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to develop a training and educational program, in consultation with interested stakeholders, for any entity or individual that is licensed by PSC as an electricity supplier or a gas supplier, subject to specified requirements. The program must require that a designated representative of each licensed electricity supplier or licensed gas supplier demonstrate a thorough understanding of relevant PSC regulations. PSC must conduct an examination at the end of the training and certify that the designated representative has successfully completed the training. PSC may recover the initial costs of the program through its standard assessment and may establish reasonable fees for the program. PSC may also adopt regulations that include appropriate penalties or sanctions for failure to comply with the bill.

While this bill is a step in the right direction to train the supplier representative, third-party suppliers usually outsource their direct sales. AARP is also concerned by the lack of training for the folks

hired by these suppliers. We would also recommend that it be mandated for energy suppliers to provide training and ongoing training to their foot soldiers to better explain the promotional rates and long term to tell potential customers to review their bill after the introductory rate expires. We would also recommend that suppliers train their staff to tell the truth. Many vulnerable Marylanders are looking for cheaper utilities because they have limited to fixed income and when those variable rates go into effect after the introductory rate, your constituents, face turn off notices and may in some cases, may even lose their rental residency if they can't keep the lights on.

AARP believes that policymakers should ensure consumers have access to reliable, safe, and high-quality utility electric and gas services. Services should be offered at just and reasonable rates. Fair terms and conditions, as well as minimum service standard protections, must be included.

AARP also believes that policymakers should take all steps to prohibit unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices. These include unfair early termination penalties and misleading marketing practices.

For these reasons, we believe you might consider HB 968 but to include more training and requiring a report to the General Assembly to see if training suppliers ends the ruthless predatory practices that currently exist. If you have questions, please contact Tammy Bresnahan at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.