



March 4, 2020

Chairman Pinsky, Madame Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 835 County and Municipal Street Lighting and Investment Act

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Madame Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee:

On behalf of the City of Gaithersburg, I am writing to convey our support for SB 835, which would authorize a local government to convert its street lighting service to an alternative-energy-only tariff. The bill would also allow municipalities to purchase existing street lights and assume responsibility for maintaining the lights. Additionally, a municipality could enter into an agreement to purchase electricity, through a fair and efficient process. The bill also specifies, that if a county or municipality and the electric company fail to agree to the purchase price or conditions for purchasing the street lighting equipment, the county or municipality may acquire the equipment by condemnation.

The City's street lighting program is designed to provide well-lighted streets throughout the City, thereby increasing pedestrian and vehicular safety, suppressing crime and expanding street capacity. The program also includes lighting on state highways within the City. Street lighting fixtures on wooden poles are owned and maintained by the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO), for which the City pays a monthly fee.

We value our partnership with PEPCO, however the current system leaves municipalities very little control over their lighting programs; including maintenance and upgrades. The City is committed to transitioning our street lights to LED light bulbs, which is costly and a time consuming process. SB 835 establishes a clear and consistent process for municipalities and electrical companies to lower energy consumption, while also providing municipalities a remedy to prolong the usefulness of a street lights when considering cost.

For these reasons, the City of Gaithersburg urges a favorable report for SB 835.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. You may also contact the Legislative Affairs Manager for the City of Gaithersburg, Jessica Kwasny. She can be reached at jess.kwasny@gaitthersburgmd.gov or 301.805.1090.

Sincerely,
Jud Ashman, Mayor

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