



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 298 – UTILITY REGULATION – CONSIDERATION OF CLIMATE AND LABOR

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

JANUARY 21ST, 2020

Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned the global community that policymakers have less than a decade to embrace sustainability before further calamity ensues, and this would mean reducing global emissions by 60% before 2030. The reality of climate change requires a tangible and universal response from every stakeholder, including all of our state and regulatory agencies.

The Public Service Commission has regulatory authority over electric and gas utilities in Maryland, making them a critical stakeholder in key environmental issues in our state. Despite its crucial role in the Maryland energy sector, the PSC is not currently required to consider the state's greenhouse gas reduction commitments in its decision-making. This legislation will require the Commission to make decisions with consideration of short term and long-term warming. In order to stay consistent with Maryland's commitment to addressing climate change, the Commission must be required to use recent and reliable published information by UN/IPCC recognized sources.

In a 2019 order, the PSC found that there was no explicit direction in the current law to consider the impact of climate change when reviewing power plant modifications. This decision highlighted the need to include this requirement explicitly in PSC statute.

Another key element of this legislation is aimed at protecting workers that are affected by the areas regulated by the PSC. Decisions made by the PSC related to mergers, rate-setting, and the regulation of generators can have impacts on workers in Maryland. As we develop a new, green economy, it is crucial that we do this in a way that builds jobs with family sustaining wages and good benefits. This bill will ensure that those impacts are considered.

By explicitly directing the PSC to consider climate change and labor in their decision-making, we will have an enhanced ability to meet the goals set forth by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act and ensure strong protections for workers in the energy related industries.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB298.