



Chairman Dereck Davis
Vice-Chair Kathleen Dumais
Members
House Economic Matters Committee
241 House Ofc Bldg.
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 18, 2021

HB 890 – Natural Gas – Strategic Infrastructure Development and Enhancement – Surcharge and Plans

Position – Favorable

Chairman Davis and members of the Committee, my name is Rick Binetti, representing LiUNA's Baltimore Washington Laborers' District Council. We represent more than 7,400 members in the Maryland, D.C. and Virginia region; two-thirds of whom are Maryland residents and in favor of House Bill 890.

Building, repairing and maintaining natural gas infrastructure with a skilled workforce protects Maryland's communities, environment, and improves overall energy distribution safety. Today, utility companies in Maryland today are contracting out large portions of their construction work. At any given time, up to 1,000 of our members work on utility construction projects for contractors employed by Washington Gas, BGE and Pepco.

For example, BGE also uses close to 1,000 contracted-out workers to help maintain its infrastructure. And virtually all of Washington Gas's pipe replacement projects are performed by contractors. LiUNA Locals 11 and 710 work with many of these contractors to recruit and train both apprentices, and journeyman to do this work. STRIDE is critical to this mission. When this funding is used to help ensure there is a constant pipeline of well-trained utility construction workers to do this work, Maryland's economy benefits.

Maryland's environment benefits as well. As we continue toward meeting greenhouse reduction requirements and transitioning away from using coal to produce energy at any level, Maryland will face energy shortages at some point. Because it is so much cleaner than coal, natural gas will help fill that gap, and reduce our carbon emissions, as we continue to work through how to scale up solar, wind and geothermal to industrial levels. As a compliment to that, STRIDE ensures that the natural gas distribution systems built by local utilities in our state will remain the cleanest, the most modern, safe, reliable and affordable energy delivery system for Maryland's families and businesses.

Along with this testimony I am including a link to a Clean Power Progress fact sheet for Maryland which provides an overview of Maryland energy future over the next ten years:

<http://cleanpowerprogress.org/?state=Maryland>

We urge for a favorable report on HB 890. Thank you.