



**Committee:** Economic Matters

**Testimony on:** HB02928 Utility Regulation – Consideration of Climate and Labor

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** January 21, 2021

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Charkoudian

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2000 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all of our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0298 because it will make sure that the Public Service Commission (PSC) explicitly addresses the existential threat of climate change in its future decision-making.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are a driving factor in global warming and climate change. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA) of 2016 requires that Maryland work to reduce GHGs significantly over the coming years. The PSC is the regulatory agency that oversees Maryland's gas and electric utilities and approves energy generation facilities. According to the most recent GHG Inventory published by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), gas utilities and generation of electricity together account for almost a third of the GHG emissions, including CO<sub>2</sub>, methane, and nitrous oxides, in Maryland. Therefore, the PSC plays a major role in regulating industries and facilities that make major contributions to the state's GHG emissions and climate change.

However, there is a gap between the GGRA and current statutes relating to the PSC. The PSC has interpreted its governing statute not to allow consideration of GHG emission or impacts of new electricity generation facilities on climate change in its decisions. This gap in requirements allows the PSC to make decisions that are contrary to what Maryland needs to do to meet its GHG reduction goals and mitigate climate change.

HB0298 will close this gap and require the PSC to use the best available science to consider GHG emissions and near- and longer-term climate impacts in all of its decisions regarding Maryland electricity generation and Maryland electricity and gas service companies. This will make sure that PSC decisions are consistent with Maryland's important commitments to reducing GHGs and mitigating the effects of climate change for all of its residents.

In addition, HB0298 will also require the PSC to promote fair labor standards by collecting information about the wages and benefits provided by contractors and subcontractors in the energy sector in Maryland.

Including these considerations in the regulatory process is crucial as we work toward building a new, just, green economy. Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0298 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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