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**BILL NO. :** Senate Bill 754

**TITLE:** Public Service Commission- Damaged, Obsolete, or Excessive Lines - Fines

**COMMITTEE:** Finance Committee

**HEARING DATE:** March 9, 2021

**VERIZON POSITION:** Opposed

**PURPOSE OF BILL:**

Senate Bill 754 creates a new task for the Public Service Commission (“PSC”). The bill would require the PSC to notify owners of utility poles about damaged, dangling, obsolete, or redundant lines. Upon issuance of the notification, the PSC would be tasked with issuing and collecting fines if the prescribed timelines for cure are not met.

**COMMENTS:**

Verizon is committed to building, operating, and maintaining a technology network that provides its customers with technology solutions needed for their education, public safety, health and economic needs. Verizon has a notification system in place that allows us to be both proactive and reactive to any issues with our lines and wires. Service and reliability are our highest priorities in meeting our customer’s needs. To deliver on this commitment, Verizon techs are deployed daily throughout Maryland and are tasked with installation, repair, and maintenance of the networks. During the course of these normal operations, our technicians remove dead wires, remove outdated and decommissioned equipment, replace or reposition poles based on age or damage, clean up terminal boxes, and replace and/or adjust lines to proper heights, etc. In addition to the aforementioned, Verizon receives, through its customer service phone, on-line and social media chains, residents inquiries and concerns related to its physical network that results in the Verizon's Operation's Team investigating and taking the appropriate action to respond and/or address the matter raised by residents, customers, and government. As a result of the aforementioned, we have identified, addressed, and closed over 700 wire tickets in the past year, and will address and close future issues as they are identified. It is for these reasons, as well as the following, that Verizon does not believe that SB754 is necessary and urges an unfavorable committee vote.

We would also like to point out a few other concerns with this bill. Under existing law, pole owners are required to allow various entities to attach equipment to their poles. It is unfair to penalize the pole owner if one of those attachers refuses to comply with this bill and fails to promptly clean up their facilities. The owner has no leverage to force them to clean it up, and

the owner is legally required to allow the attacher continued use of the pole. Since the bill only penalizes the pole owner, there is no penalty or incentive for the attacher to resolve the issue that triggered notice from the PSC.

Moreover, the bill includes vague and subjective language regarding the types of issues it is seeking to cure. There are no definitions in the bill and the bill fails to delegate the authority for determining whether a wire is damaged, obsolete, redundant, or a public nuisance. The use of subjective and undefined terms will likely result in disputes and litigation between the PSC, pole owners and attachers.

Verizon believes we, along with industry partners, can come together and address the wire issues with better communication and coordination. For these reasons, Verizon urges an **UNFAVORABLE COMMITTEE REPORT on Senate Bill 754.**

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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