

SB 856 support Letter 2021.pdf

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March 9, 2021

To: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Chair, Finance Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 856 – Electric Companies – Billing Information (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of Senate Bill 856 submitted by Senator Stephen S. Hershey, Jr. This bill requires an electric company to make at least the preceding 12 months of usage and billing information available to its customers in the manner requested.

Deregulation of electricity provides consumers with a wide variety of suppliers from which they can obtain their electricity. However, without a clear understanding of the rates and usage information over a period of time, it may be difficult for a consumer to determine if the plan they have chosen is providing them with the optimal benefit. If a variable rate plan is utilized, only by comparing these rates over a period of time, can a consumer determine how these rates are impacting his or her overall costs. This bill would require an electric company to be transparent, and permit consumers to review the cost over a period of time to determine if the current plan is meeting their needs or if an alternate plan should be considered.

For these reasons, we ask that the Finance Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.
Members, Finance Committee

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BILL NO.: Senate Bill 856
Electric Companies – Billing Information

COMMITTEE: Finance

HEARING DATE: March 9, 2021

SPONSOR: Senator Hershey

POSITION: Support with amendments

The Office of People’s Counsel (OPC) supports Senate Bill 856 with amendments. Senate Bill 856 would require electric companies to provide historic usage and billing information to a customer upon the customer’s request. The bill requires companies to provide the information in one of three forms, as requested by the customer: (1) on the utility website, (2) electronically in a searchable PDF format, or (3) as a physical document sent to the customer’s billing address.

The bill enables customers to obtain valuable information that they can use to make decisions about their electric service – for example, investments in energy efficiency, distributed generation, and the selection of a supplier. The usage and billing information assists customers in making more informed decisions.

As drafted, the bill applies to all electric companies in the State, including small electric cooperatives and municipal utilities. We understand that not all of these smaller electric companies have the systems in place to provide the required information in all three forms that the bill requires. To prevent unnecessary expenditures by these utilities, we recommend that the bill exempt cooperative and municipal utilities from the requirement to provide this information in the form requested by the customer.

Office of People's Counsel Testimony on SB 856

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Recommendation: The Office of People's Counsel respectfully requests a FAVORABLE REPORT, with the amendment suggested above, on Senate Bill 856.