

HB0088 - Public Utilities - Energy Distribution Planning and Required Labor Standards (Grid Reliability and Inclusive Distribution Act)

Date: February 3, 2022

Committee: House Economic Matters Committee

Position: Favorable

Frances Stewart

Elders Climate Action Maryland

On behalf of Elders Climate Action Maryland, I urge a favorable report from the committee on **HB0088 - Public Utilities - Energy Distribution Planning and Required Labor Standards.**

This bill works in conjunction with the Public Service Commission's Distribution System Planning process. It provides valuable guidelines, supports inclusive stakeholder engagement, and directs federal infrastructure funding to support this essential work.

The GRID Act:

- Defines how we will meet state climate goals, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, expanding our use of renewable energy, promoting equity, supporting family-sustaining employment, and ensuring energy resiliency and cost-effectiveness.
- Directs one-time federal infrastructure funding to support grid improvements. This works in tandem with grant funding from the Department of Energy to support grid modernization.
- Ensures representative engagement in the distribution grid planning processes, including:
 - Residential and commercial energy customers
 - Low-income communities
 - Environmental advocacy groups
 - Labor unions
 - Industry experts in electric vehicles, distributed energy resources, and distribution planning
- Requires the PSC to issue an annual report about its progress.
- Supports family-sustaining jobs by requiring that all distribution grid upgrade projects:
 - Offer the area prevailing wage for each trade employed
 - Provide health and retirement benefits
 - Participate in apprenticeship programs registered with the state for the trade
 - Develop a plan to recruit and retain state residents, including returning citizens, women, minority individuals, and veterans

We want to highlight one of the many benefits this bill would bring – improving the resiliency and adaptability of our electricity supply. The electric grid in Maryland, like in the rest of the United States, is poorly prepared to meet the challenges it faces. Each year, we have an increasing number of climate-associated emergencies. We all remember the massive power outage in Texas last year and how many people were seriously affected. The grid also faces threats from other types of emergencies and cyber-attacks. Disruptions in our electricity supply

affect us all, but some are particularly vulnerable, including the elderly, young children, and people with chronic medical conditions.

The Federal infrastructure bill gives us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in vital improvements to make our grid more resilient. They can help Maryland meet its clean energy goals, decrease greenhouse gas emissions and create good jobs. These improvements are essential for creating a future that will allow our children and grandchildren to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration of HB0088. For all the reasons stated above, I urge a favorable vote from the committee.

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