



Center for  
Progressive  
Reform

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**Testimony of Bryan Dunning**  
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**Before the Maryland House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee  
Requesting a Favorable Report on HB0540: Investor-Owned Electric, Gas, and Gas and  
Electric Companies – Utility Rate Changes (Public Service Company Transparency Act)**

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and the members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB0540, the Public Service Company Transparency Act. The Center for Progressive reform is a research and advocacy nonprofit organization that works to advance equity, and responsive and transparent governance. For the following reasons, the Center respectfully requests that the committee return a **favorable** reading on this bill.

HB0540 is a commonsense transparency bill that will provide a tool for ratepayers to understand and engage with utility requests for rate increases. As the majority of Maryland utilities have seen [rates increasing](#) faster, in some instance, much faster, than inflation over the past decade, clarity as to how this process occurs, and the history of rate hikes that have led to untenable utility bills is crucial. This is especially important given the context that, as rates have skyrocketed, many utilities have achieved record yearly profits.

**Transparency**

This bill requires that the utilities make a disclosure to ratepayers through either bill insert or separate email when the utility is initiating a proceeding at the Maryland Public Services Commission (MD PSC) that may result in a rate change, along with the dates of the proceeding, and information about how to access the proceeding. This is a basic requirement to provide notice to impacted customers about how to weigh in on the rate increases by their *public utility*.

## **Reporting and Education**

The bill requires that each investor-owned utility prepare a 10-year rate trend report that identifies both capital expenditures as well as commodity costs and rate riders, and presents that information graphically. This report is to be submitted to MD PSC and distributed to customers and publicly posted on the utility's website. MD PSC and the Maryland Office of People's Counsel (MD OPC) also work to publish a non-technical description of observed rate trends for the public, and MD OPC has authority to bring a case before MD PSC if the rate reports are factually incorrect or presented in a misleading manner.

This reporting is a common-sense process, subject to oversight, that can inform the public as to the history and driving factors (e.g. capital investments and specific infrastructure projects) causing rate increases. Given the public concern about rising utility bills, and competition, and potentially misleading information as to the root cause, this is an important step to ensuring that the public can understand why bills are increasing. This improved access to information can also have the benefit of empowering the public to meaningfully engage in rate increase cases if and when their utility pursues them.

## **Conclusion**

This is a commonsense bill that will improve utility transparency, educate and empower the public, and does so with a budget neutral fiscal and policy note. As such, the Center for Progressive Reform respectfully asks the committee to return a **favorable** reading on this bill.

Sincerely,  
Bryan Dunning  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Center for Progressive Reform