

Chesapeake Bay Foundation * Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Environment Maryland * Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Patuxent Riverkeeper * Sierra Club * West / Rhode Riverkeeper

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of
House Bill 374
EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act of 2008

Economic Matters Committee
February 12, 2008

Maryland has some of the highest residential electricity prices in the Mid-Atlantic Region and demand continues to grow. Per capita consumption of electricity in Maryland is almost twice what it is in California. Energy generation in Maryland comes primarily from the burning of coal and other fossil fuels, which emit huge quantities of carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and other pollutants such as mercury. These atmospheric pollutants are a leading cause of both environmental and human health problems. Atmospheric pollution contributes as much as one-third of the nutrient pollution to the Chesapeake Bay, causing algae blooms and low-oxygen dead zones, and contributes to poor air quality, respiratory illness and fish consumption advisories across the state.

It stands to reason, therefore, that efforts to reduce energy generation and consumption, and more efficiently utilize energy both at home and at work, would benefit consumers' pocketbooks, the health of our air and water, and the very health of Maryland's families. For these reasons, the organizations listed above strongly support House Bill 374.

House Bill 374 codifies the Governor's call to reduce per capita energy consumption across Maryland by 15% by 2015. The bill spells out that 10% of this reduction target is to be met by the electric utilities through a variety of consumer programs, approved by the Public Service Commission, and that the remaining 5% will be met through programs administered by the Maryland Energy Administration. Programs to meet these reductions in per capita electricity use can be as simple as switching to more energy efficient light bulbs and home energy audits, or more advanced programs such as "smart metering" of homes and businesses to reduce peak energy demand.

Maryland is particularly vulnerable to greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel combustion to meet our energy needs. With over 3100 miles of low-lying shoreline, Maryland is already feeling the effects of rising sea levels and changes in coastal storm intensity. Greenhouse gases, such as NO_x, hit Maryland doubly hard by simultaneously contributing to climate change and by fueling water quality problems in the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers. Energy efficiency can meaningfully address both these threats by directly reducing the amounts of these pollutants emitted annually into Maryland's air.

Therefore, we respectfully request a favorable report from the House Economic Matters Committee on House Bill 374 – EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act of 2008.