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BILL NO: **House Bill 508-Analog Meters-Purchase and Installation**

COMMITTEE: **Economic Matters**

HEARING DATE: **March 26, 2015**

SPONSORS: **Delegates Glass et al.**

POSITION: **Informational**

House Bill 508 would authorize customers to purchase and install analog meters meeting certain safety and performance standards to replace any different kind of meter already installed at the customer's premise, including smart meters. Additionally, the Bill prohibits a gas or electric company from imposing additional controls or requiring a customer to pay for additional tests.

In Case Nos. 9207 and 9208, the Maryland Public Service Commission examined the need for and costs and benefits involved with installing smart meters. As a result of orders issued in those cases, installation of smart meters has been continuing throughout the service territories of Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, Potomac Electric Power Company and Delmarva Power and Light Company. Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative is also installing smart meters in at least part of its service territory. Due to concerns about health and privacy raised by some customers, the Commission has issued orders allowing customers to "opt-out" of meter

installation. Customers who opt-out are charged a one-time fee of \$75 and a monthly charge which varies by utility.

OPC notes that House Bill 508 refers to an “analog meter” as a substitute for an existing meter. Analog meters are not defined in the bill, but frequently are understood to be “non-digital.” This reference to analog meters may have an unintended consequence, as OPC understands that utility meters include both analog and digital meters that lack 2-way communication capability. Additionally, OPC has learned from utilities and other sources that availability of analog meters is shrinking as manufacturers have shifted to newer generation meters.

For safety and billing accuracy reasons, the Public Service Commission has adopted extensive regulations governing meter requirements, inspections and tests. See COMAR 20.50.05 and COMAR 20.50.06. These regulations require the utility to meet certain requirements, including record keeping on inventory, history and testing of utility installed meters. The Commission would have to be able to ensure that customer installed meters meet the necessary safety and billing accuracy requirements to fully protect the customer.