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Bill Declaring People's Counsel Mandate to Consider Climate Mitigation, Environment, Heads to Governor for Signing

(April 13, 2021) -- In a hopeful step toward mitigating climate change and furthering environmental protection for Maryland citizens, the Office of People's Counsel Environmental Reform Act has passed the Maryland General Assembly and moved to Governor Larry Hogan for signing.

The bill—House Bill 30, sponsored by Delegate Marc Korman (District 16)—requires OPC's advocacy for Maryland residential customer interests to consider climate change mitigation and the environment. The bill states that OPC must hire staff to focus on environmental and climate issues, and it authorizes OPC to hire environmental and climate change experts. The legislation makes explicit OPC's environmental mandate and helps OPC obtain the resources to be effective in its effort.

“By adding climate mitigation and the environment into our consumer-protection mandate, this bill recognizes that regulatory policy can and must further the interests of consumers in both environmental protection and cost-effectiveness,” said People’s Counsel David S. Lapp. “The best policy solutions will advance both environmental and consumer goals.”

The bill received important support from House Economic Matters Committee Chair Delegate Dereck E. Davis (District 25) and Senate Finance Committee Chair Senator Delores G. Kelley (District 10) and Vice-Chair Senator Brian J. Feldman (District 15).

Created in 1924, the Office of People’s Counsel is the oldest utility consumer advocacy office of its kind in the United States. The Office represents Maryland’s residential consumers in utility regulatory matters before federal and state agencies and courts. The People’s Counsel is appointed for a five-year term by the Attorney General of Maryland, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Office acts independently of other parts of Maryland government.

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