

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

LO26-0043

*Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BGE) Gas
Safety & Affordability*

Public Testimony

KWEISI MFUME

7th DISTRICT, MARYLAND

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOUTH AND
CENTRAL ASIA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT
REFORM**

RANKING MEMBER,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Honorable Zeke Cohen and Members of the Baltimore City Council,

For far too long, residents of Baltimore have suffered from exorbitantly high gas and electricity rates. Baltimore Gas and Electric's (BGE) 2024-2026 multiyear rate plan has been a significant cause, increasing electric and gas distribution rates far beyond the pace of inflation. In 2023, Baltimoreans paid slightly less than 70 cents in distribution charges for every therm of gas that they consumed. This year, Baltimoreans pay nearly a dollar per therm.¹ That may not seem significant, but with households often consuming hundreds of therms of natural gas a year, many residents pay hundreds more in yearly gas costs compared to just three years ago.

Simply put, my constituents cannot afford these cost increases. Since the steep 2025 rate increase came into effect, my office has received nearly 200 requests for assistance – doubtless a small fraction of the thousands of Baltimoreans that now face significant hardship affording their bills. These increases hit older adults and those on fixed incomes especially hard, and my constituents have reported significant issues accessing BGE's call center and receiving turn-off notices required for bill assistance from many non-profit organizations.

BGE has argued before Maryland's Public Service Commission (PSC) that these distribution cost increases are necessary to maintain our city's aging gas delivery infrastructure. I do not take these concerns lightly. However, according to Exelon's latest 10-k corporate filing, BGE collected \$527 million in net income in 2024 – over double the \$198 million they earned in 2014. In fact, Exelon notes in their 10-k filing that net income increased by \$42 million from 2023 to 2024 primarily due to favorable distribution rates – favorable distribution rates allegedly needed to pay for infrastructure repair.²

Their own filings make it clear that BGE can easily afford the repairs that they claim they can only pay for with significant distribution rate increases that fall on the backs of everyday Baltimoreans. New developments, including the enactment of the Next Generation Energy Act and the Maryland Public Service Commission's recent halving of

¹ Office of People's Counsel, State of Maryland, *Utility Rates and Basics – BGE*, Feb. 2026. [Link](#).

² Exelon, *10-K*, Feb. 12, 2025, at 62. [Link](#).

KWEISI MFUME

7th DISTRICT, MARYLAND

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOUTH AND
CENTRAL ASIA

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

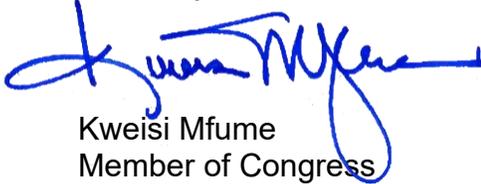
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT
REFORM

RANKING MEMBER,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BGE's attempted reconciliation rate increase, create hope that the era of blank checks for BGE has ended. I urge the Maryland Public Service Commission to continue standing up to unnecessary rate increases, and I urge our public utility to take seriously their obligation to our community to keep rates low, faithfully assist those in need, and end the planned layoffs of 68 employees in the midst of record profits.

Sincerely,



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

2263 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2007
(202) 225-4741

1010 Park Avenue, Suite 105
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-5037
(410) 685-9199

754 Frederick Road
Catonsville, MD 21228-4504
(410) 685-9199



February 11, 2026

**Comment Only Testimony on LO26-0043
Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BGE) Gas Safety & Affordability**

Dear Council President Cohen and Members of the City Council,

My name is Taylor Smith-Hams and I'm a resident of the 14th District. I'm here today as a member of the Baltimore Public Power Campaign, a grassroots campaign to transition away from our reliance on BGE's exploitative monopoly to a publicly-owned utility that will ensure lower bills, cleaner energy, and local control for Baltimore City residents. We believe that energy is a human right, not a commodity for monopoly corporations like BGE to profit off of.

As we all know, BGE's profits have tripled since 2010. Meanwhile, all of us have seen our bills skyrocket during that same time period. So it's pretty obvious that what the company says about all of this gas infrastructure spending being about safety is just not true – it's about money.

As a longtime organizer and activist, I have testified at the Public Service Commission against BGE rate hikes. I have advocated in support of utility reforms in Annapolis. I have encouraged my friends and neighbors to do the same. But it's not working – people still can't pay their bills. Households are still having their power shut off. And we haven't stopped them from building more gas infrastructure in the middle of a climate crisis.

We need to be brave enough to put a different vision forward. Across the country, 2,000 communities are powered by public utilities that prioritize benefits for their customers, not profits for faraway shareholders. And the data is clear: public power is cheaper, more reliable, and cleaner than privately owned utilities.¹ Public power leads to more investment in local communities and residents have more control and get to participate in running it.

From large cities like Austin to small towns in Nebraska, public power is working for people across the country. And more and more communities are trying to make the switch.² In December, a campaign for public power in upstate New York released a feasibility study that found that taking over their grid would save close to \$3 billion over 30 years.³ Winter Park, FL

¹ American Public Power Association. [Stats and Facts](#). 2026.

² Derek Seidman. [As Electricity Bills Rise, Activists Are Demanding Public Control of Utilities](#). Truthout. January 2, 2026.

³ Hudson Valley for Public Power. [Study: HVPA Will Save Money](#).

made the switch to public power two decades ago and has successfully lowered rates by 24% compared to Duke Energy and has increased reliability and resilience during storms.⁴

As Baltimoreans struggle to make ends meet and are being forced to choose between paying their utility bills or for medication this winter, now is the time for Baltimore to be bold and to take control over our energy.

Oversight hearings like this are nice, but we need real action and solutions from our elected officials. Public power is a proven alternative to the corporate profiteering and extortionist rates we have all been victim to as BGE customers. I urge the City Council to seriously explore public power in Baltimore.

Sincerely,
Taylor Smith-Hams

⁴ Susan Partain. [Fulfilling Promises: 20 Years of Public Power in Winter Park](#). American Public Power Association. July 1, 2025.

City Council Testimony 2-11-26

February 11, 2026

Comment Only Testimony on LO26-0043

Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BGE) Gas Safety & Affordability

Dear Council President Cohen and Members of the City Council,

My name is Abigail Ulman and I'm a resident of the District 14. I'm a public health professional and a former campaign lead for We Power DC, a grassroots public power campaign in the District of Columbia. I moved to Baltimore almost 4 years ago for grad school and now consider the city home.

I'm here today as a member of the Baltimore Public Power Campaign, a grassroots campaign to transition away from our reliance on BGE's exploitative monopoly to a publicly-owned utility that will ensure lower bills, cleaner energy, and local control for Baltimore City residents. We believe that energy is a human right, not a commodity for corporations like BGE to profit off of.

Since 2010, BGE's gas delivery rates have increased by 246% and electric delivery rates by 92%, straining all of our pockets. During that same time, BGE's profits have tripled. **So when BGE blames high bills on inflation or other factors "outside of their control," you need to call them on it. This is a for-profit, monopoly corporation that answers only to shareholders, prioritizing the maximization of profits over affordability, reliability, the health of the people of Baltimore, and a liveable future.**

Due to BGE's consistent rate hikes, my bill has doubled from this month last year. Luckily, I have a well-paying job and am able to afford my bill, but thousands of Baltimoreans cannot. Residents should not have to choose between rent or groceries or medicine or their BGE bill – it is absolutely absurd that BGE bills are as high as some residents' rent!

Thankfully, there is a real alternative to the predatory profit-driven utility model: public power. There are thousands of publicly-owned utilities across the country, from big cities like Sacramento and Seattle to the entire state of Nebraska.

Unsurprisingly, public power customers pay less than their for-profit counterparts. On average, public power customers pay 13% less than customers of for-profit utilities. And in some areas like Sacramento and Silicon Valley, the difference can be as extreme as 50 to 60%! Public utilities are also leaders in the transition to clean energy, and they invest 9% more in local communities than for-profit utility corporations.

As Baltimoreans struggle to make ends meet and are being forced to choose between paying their utility bills or for medication this winter, now is the time for Baltimore to be bold and to take control over our energy.

We need real action and solutions from our elected officials. Public power is a proven alternative to the corporate profiteering and extortionist rates we have all been victim to as BGE customers. With the over 2,000 publicly-owned utilities in the country, Baltimore has a well-tested and effective precedent to follow in our city. **I urge the City Council to seriously explore public power in Baltimore.** Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Abigail Ulman, MPH

February 11, 2026

Comment Only Testimony on LO26-0043
Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BGE) Gas Safety & Affordability

Dear Council President Cohen and Members of the City Council,

My name is Andrew Hinz and I live in the 1400 block of Park Avenue—I have lived here the last 15 years and in Maryland my whole life. Before moving to the city I was able to install a geothermal HVAC system in my prior residence. It was fabulous—we have alternatives to high methane fuel and delivery charges and explosive fuel in our homes and we have had them for awhile.

First main point: methane is inherently unsafe both locally and globally. I have the methane boiler in my 1880 rowhome serviced annually. In spite of that when I had an energy audit done last year 2 methane leaks were found—one 6 feet from the meter in my basement and the other 1 foot from the methane boiler in my basement. The methane was collecting in our bedroom on the second floor—it was not an amount that would explode but it is not healthy to breathe. I hope to replace that methane boiler with an electric air-to-water heat pump as soon as I can afford it or can borrow the money to do it. I have been fortunate enough to be able to afford converting both a methane-fueled cooktop and a methane-fueled water heater to safe and efficient electric appliances.

Second main point: Baltimore city can easily generate our own electricity with all the rooftop solar, canopy solar, brownfield solar, and infrastructure we have. We could even build a pumped-storage hydro long-term battery storage system with our stormwater runoff and repurposed tunnels and fossil fuel storage tanks.

We should declare the city an Energy Justice Microgrid, and become energy independent of Exelon and PJM and the fossil fuel oligarchs who are gouging us as they destroy the climate—ALL this Petrostate fascism and skyrocketing bills when we have cheaper and cleaner alternatives.

Public Power NOW!

Sincerely,
Andrew Hinz
1427 Park Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21217
443-617-4079
ahinz61@outlook.com

1. Why I’m Speaking Up

I live and work in Baltimore’s East Side and serve a private Jewish day school where the majority of families are low-income. My own recent experience - being over-billed \$750 for gas and having to force the PSC to review a decade-long utility history - shows how BGE’s practices hurt everyday residents.

2. Key Facts (All 2024-2025 data)

Issue	Data Point	Why It Matters
For-profit mandate	BGE is owned by Exelon, a publicly-traded utility. Its primary fiduciary duty is to shareholders, not customers.	Corporate decisions prioritize profit over affordability.
Shareholder ties to Maryland	Maryland retirement funds (e.g., MD 529, public employee pension plans) hold large Exelon positions.	Creates regulatory capture – the PSC is incentivized to favor BGE.
Delivery-fee hikes	Gas delivery rates ↑ 246 % (2010-2024) – ≈ 3× inflation. Electric delivery rates ↑ 92 % – ≈ 2× inflation.	Residents face bill spikes of \$500-\$1,500 during heat waves.
Profit growth	Net profit: \$147 M (2010) → \$527 M (2024).	Profit tripling while customers pay more.
Energy burden	82 % of Baltimore City residents list household energy cost as a major issue. 2022: City’s net energy burden = 11 % (highest in MD).	Energy costs are a leading cause of financial distress.
Utility debt	Customer debt rose to \$117 M (2025) from \$84 M (2022).	Debt burden pushes families toward arrears and disconnection.
Infrastructure “investment”	BGE digs up primary roads for gas-line replacement, does minimal repairs, leaving the city to fund full restoration.	Taxpayers shoulder costs for BGE’s profit-driven projects.

3. The Real Cost to Baltimore Families

Food vs. Power: Many families must choose between groceries/medication and keeping the lights on.

Housing Instability: Unaffordable bills increase risk of utility shut-offs, exacerbating homelessness.

Health Impacts: Cold homes in winter raise asthma attacks and other health emergencies, especially among children.

4. Public Power – A Proven, Affordable Alternative

Metric	Public Power (national average)	Investor-Owned Utilities
Customer price advantage	13 % lower overall; some markets see 50-60 % savings.	Higher rates to cover profit margins.
Clean-energy leadership	Public utilities lead in renewable-energy adoption and community-solar programs.	Profit motives can delay transition.
Local reinvestment	Profits are reinvested locally (grid upgrades, education, job training).	Profits flow to distant shareholders.
Examples	Los Angeles Dept. of Water & Power; Austin Energy; Nebraska Public Power District.	Comparable regions with IOUs have higher rates and lower local investment.

5. What Baltimore Must Do – Action Items for the City Council

Commission an independent cost-benefit analysis of converting BGE service to a municipally-owned public power entity.

Mandate transparency: Require BGE to disclose all infrastructure contracts, road-repair costs, and delivery-fee calculations.

Protect low-income households: Freeze or roll back delivery-fee increases until a public-power feasibility study is completed.

Explore partnerships with existing public utilities (e.g., PEPCO's public-power pilot, regional cooperatives) to leverage expertise.

Engage community voices: Hold town-hall meetings in affected neighborhoods, especially low-income districts, to gather input and build consensus.

6. Closing Appeal

Baltimore has a moral and economic imperative to stop subsidizing corporate profit at the expense of its residents. Public power is not a theoretical ideal - it is a practical, proven model that delivers lower bills, cleaner energy, and community reinvestment. I respectfully urge the Council to seriously explore a public-power transition and protect the most vulnerable Baltimoreans from predatory utility practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my thoughts. I am happy to answer any questions and provide further data as needed.

Dear Council President Cohen and Members of the City Council,

My name is Leo Cunningham and I'm a resident of the 3rd District. I am an artist and educator. I own my own home, work multiple jobs, but can barely afford to pay my monthly bills.

I know folks who have had their power shut-off and folks whose already tight budgets have been unnecessarily strained by these inflated bills. Personally, I've done everything I can to keep my bills lower—added insulation, kept my thermostat at or below 60 degrees, and avoided using electric heaters and large appliances—but my bill keeps going up. This month, for the first time in my entire life, I am late on a bill because I am trying to source the funds to pay it.

Since 2010, BGE has raised gas delivery rates by 246% and electric delivery rates by 92%, putting growing pressure on household budgets across Baltimore. Over that same period, the company's profits have more than tripled. So when BGE points to inflation or other supposedly "out-of-their-control" forces to explain soaring bills, that narrative deserves serious scrutiny. This is a for-profit monopoly accountable to shareholders alone, consistently placing profit maximization ahead of affordability, service reliability, public health, and a livable future for Baltimore.

There is, however, a proven alternative to this profit-driven utility model: public power. Across the United States, thousands of communities rely on publicly owned utilities—from major cities like Los Angeles and Austin to the entire state of Nebraska.

It's no coincidence that public power customers generally pay less. On average, rates are about 13% lower than those charged by for-profit utilities, and in some regions the savings reach 50% or more. Publicly owned utilities also tend to lead on clean energy adoption and reinvest more directly in the communities they serve.

As Baltimore residents struggle to get by and many face impossible choices between heating their homes and paying for essential medication, this moment calls for bold leadership. Baltimore must seriously consider taking control of its energy future.

Our elected officials owe us real solutions, not excuses. Public power offers a well-established alternative to corporate profiteering and punishing rates that BGE customers have endured for years. **I strongly urge the City Council to meaningfully explore public power for Baltimore.**

Sincerely,
Leo Cunningham

February 11, 2026

Comment Only Testimony on LO26-0043

Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BGE) Gas Safety & Affordability

Dear Council President Cohen and Members of the City Council,

My name is Anna Duke and I'm a resident of District 1. I'm a social worker and a neighbor in Highlandtown.

I'm here today as a member of the Baltimore Public Power Campaign, a community led campaign to provide citizens of Baltimore public gas and electric, instead of relying on an exploitative private cooperation (BGE). Power is a human right and Baltimore deserves a public power that is accountable to Baltimore residents, not corporate shareholders.

For the past two years, BGE rates have skyrocketed while my neighbors and I have faced disruptive construction of new gas lines, power outages and failures of said new gas equipment. I and members of my community are in fear of each new BGE bill, knowing that despite rationing heat during this extreme cold, we will be receiving utility bills that are higher than ever.

Services that are essential to citizen's lives should be public. BGE's profits have tripled since 2010, and we are the ones paying for it. It's not an inevitability that citizens are bled dry by corporations in order to heat and cool their homes. If the power was made public, then we wouldn't have to fight with shareholder greed.

This is an issue that unites all of Baltimore. BGE's monopoly on gas and electricity in the city has led to increasingly inhumane conditions for residents. I strongly urge you to consider public power.

Sincerely,

Anna Duke

To whom it may concern:

My name is Kathleen, and I am submitting testimony to comment on the discussion of BGE's business practices. Although I am a County resident, I feel it is important to speak out on the direction the city takes as it would have a lasting impact on the greater Baltimore area at large, and that it is important to set a precedence for the case for public power and to speak out against the practices at BGE.

I'm here today as a member of the Baltimore Public Power Campaign, a grassroots campaign to transition away from our reliance on BGE's exploitative monopoly to a publicly-owned utility that will ensure lower bills, cleaner energy, and local control for Baltimore City residents. We believe that energy is a human right, not a commodity for corporations like BGE to profit off of.

Since 2010, BGE's gas delivery rates have increased by 246% and electric delivery rates by 92%, straining all of our pockets. During that same time, BGE's profits have tripled. So when BGE blames high bills on inflation or other factors "outside of [their] control," you need to call them on it. This is a for-profit, monopoly corporation that answers only to shareholders, prioritizing the maximization of profits over affordability, reliability, the health of the people of Baltimore, and a liveable future.

Thankfully, there is a real alternative to the predatory profit-driven utility model: public power. There are thousands of publicly-owned utilities across the country, from big cities like Los Angeles and Austin to the entire state of Nebraska.

Unsurprisingly, public power customers pay less than their for-profit counterparts. On average, public power customers pay 13% less than customers of for-profit utilities. And in some areas, the difference can be as extreme as 50 and 60%. Public utilities are also leaders in the transition to clean energy, and they invest more in local communities than for-profit utility corporations.

As Baltimoreans struggle to make ends meet and are being forced to choose between paying their utility bills or for medication this winter, now is the time for Baltimore to be bold and to take control over our energy.

We need real action and solutions from our elected officials. Public power is a proven alternative to the corporate profiteering and extortionist rates we have all been victim to as BGE customers. I urge the City Council to seriously explore public power in Baltimore.

Respectfully yours,
Kathleen Makusky

Good evening,

My name is Sophie Content. I am pursuing my degree in social work with the aim of advocating for women's health in Baltimore. However, balancing tuition with the skyrocketing utility cost remains increasingly difficult. I worry about next year, should these prices continue.

I keep my house at 59 degrees to try to mitigate the cost. For reference, the house is under 1000 sq ft with only two occupants. Every external door and all windows has insulation film on any glass and I've redone the weather stripping. There are towels tucked into every window sill. When guests come through the front door, I'm sure they feel like I'm rushing them because I don't want the heat to escape. And yet, with all of these efforts, our bill has been pushing \$600 since November.

This is unacceptable. Even considering the rising costs of delivery and citizens footing the expense for data centers many of us do not want, these numbers do not make sense.

Please hear my testimony and take appropriate action to hold BGE accountable. These nonsensical price increases cannot continue like this. Thank you for your time and efforts, they are appreciated.

My name is Zoe Feldman, I am a resident of Baltimore City, and I'm here today because BGE's ongoing rate increases are not just spreadsheets on a slide – they are real bills hitting real families in Baltimore and throughout Maryland.

I want to speak plainly about what is happening:

Customers are paying dramatically more each year, while BGE's profits have grown substantially.

Rate Increases Have Also Far Outpaced Inflation.

- According to advocates and regulatory data, BGE's gas delivery rates have more than tripled since 2010 and electric delivery rates have roughly doubled over the same period – far faster than general inflation.
- Consumer watchdog groups report gas rates for the average residential BGE customer are about \$500 higher this year just because delivery rates have risen so much, even with the same usage.
- Since 2020, BGE's gas rates have increased roughly 50% and electric rates about 30%, again outpacing inflation substantially over that period.

These increases have hit residents hard – folks who turn down thermostats, install insulation, and otherwise conserve energy still see rising bills because the delivery charges – not just usage – keep climbing.

We've heard BGE argue these rate hikes are necessary to pay for infrastructure upgrades. But what the public doesn't always see is how that correlates with profits:

- Before Exelon's acquisition of BGE, annual profits were under about \$150 million.
- After years of regulatory approval for higher rates, BGE's profits grew to about \$527 million in 2024.

That means profits more than tripled over roughly a decade – even as customers struggled to afford rising bills.

And while Exelon is a large national utility, its ability to boost earnings – including through higher regulated rates – shows how rate mechanisms and corporate strategy can benefit shareholders at the expense of ratepayers if left unchecked. Under Maryland's revenue decoupling and multi-year rate plan system, utilities like BGE are insulated from weather-dependent changes in usage – meaning they recover revenue regardless of customer consumption behaviors.

While this structure aims to stabilize utility finances, in practice it shifts risk onto customers and reduces pressure on the utility to control costs or limit rate increases.

Across Baltimore and Maryland:

- Residents report bills in the hundreds of dollars higher with little change in usage over previous years.
- City leaders, including the Baltimore City Council president, have called on the PSC to pause multi-year rate hikes and reconsider the pace of increases because they are “relentless” and outpacing safety or service improvements.

We urge regulators and policymakers to consider the following:

1. Slow or pause future rate increases until affordability concerns are addressed.
2. Increase transparency about cost drivers and profit margins so ratepayers can clearly see what they are being charged for.
3. Strengthen regulatory oversight to ensure that infrastructure spending prioritizes safety and efficiency – not just profit maximization.

BGE costs are already out of hand, and constantly getting even more unaffordable.

Meanwhile, public power is cheaper, cleaner, and popular with the people. The City Council needs to commit to a new utility system that actually works for the people, and doesn't bankrupt them!!!