



UPGRADE MARYLAND

SAFE AND HEALTHY ENERGY FOR EVERY HOME

Andrew Johnston, Executive Secretary
Maryland Public Service Commission
6 St. Paul Street, 16th Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

September 12, 2025

In Re: Case 9707 - The Petition of the Office of People's Counsel for Near-Term, and Comprehensive, Long-Term Planning for Maryland Gas Companies

To the Maryland Public Service Commission (the Commission):

Thank you for this opportunity to provide reply comments on preliminary matters filed in accordance with the Commission's Notice of Procedural Conference issued on August 21, 2025.¹

The Upgrade Maryland Campaign and supporting groups encourage the PSC and Special Master to use the "future of gas" proceeding to protect residents from the growing costs of Maryland's aging methane gas pipelines and to jumpstart a smooth, equitable transition to clean, efficient electric home heating and appliances.

Upgrade Maryland thanks the Commission for initiating the process of establishing a procedural schedule for long-term planning for Maryland's gas infrastructure. In response to comments filed by various parties on September 5th, we want to highlight several points relating to the immediate enforcement of the Next Generation Energy Act; clarity on the handling of other near-term priority issues; and, timeline and process for the evidentiary proceedings and public participation.

I. Implementation of the Next Generation Energy Act as it relates to gas pipeline spending

We fully support the request from the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC) that the PSC clarify a timeline to address issues enumerated in Order 91791² which are impacted by the Next

¹ Notice of Procedural Conference, Case 9707, ML 321769 (August 21, 2025).

² Order no. 91791 on Instituting Long-Term Gas Planning Proceedings, Case 9707, ML 321696 (August 20, 2025), p. 7-8, (issues 8, 9, and 11).

Generation Energy Act, which went into effect on June 1, 2025. Prompt enforcement of the new law will help ensure gas pipeline spending prioritizes safety and is cost effective. Upgrade Maryland agrees with the position of OPC that compliance with the Next Generation Energy Act will require a faster timeline than long-term planning for gas infrastructure, and requests the Commission require utilities to file compliance filings within the next four to six weeks, and issue guidance to the utilities by the end of the year.

II. The Commission should provide clarity on how it is handling other priority issues

Upgrade Maryland appreciates the Commission's recent actions to address priority issues related to methane gas delivery in Maryland. The Commission's order³ ending costly gas line subsidies which no longer provide customer benefit and increase the risk of stranded assets is an important step to reducing the economic impact of methane gas to Maryland ratepayers. We ask that the Commission continue to address these priority issues, and agree with OPC's request that the Commission clarify how other priority issues raised by OPC in its previous filings⁴ are addressed. Upgrade Maryland requests that the Commission either clarify that these matters will be addressed in a separate priority docket, or will be assigned to, or otherwise under the purview of the Special Master. The PSC and Special Master should maintain authority to act on issues related to the proceeding, including "priority" issues not listed in the August order.

III. The procedural schedule and structure

Apart from priority matters and implementation of the prompt implementation of the Next Generation Energy Act, as discussed above, Upgrade Maryland supports the issues identified in Order 91791 being addressed in one comment period for this proceeding. These matters are all interrelated and crucial to address uniformly, and doing so will be the most efficient way to conduct the hearing.

We appreciate the variety of proposals on the timeline for the proceeding, and support the OPC's proposed timeline for comments and hearing as it seems to balance the need for promptness and the time needed for parties to fully engage in research and discovery.

Upgrade Maryland applauds the PSC for appointing a Special Master to handle this proceeding. We hope the formality of the process will help lead to robust argument, a complete evidentiary record, and efficient decision making. One pitfall of formal proceedings is that the structure of such a proceeding can make it less accessible and transparent for the public. Upgrade Maryland thanks the Commission for inviting interested persons to file comments and replies in support of the procedural conference, building on a record of public engagement, access, and transparency over the last year. By inviting public participation, this proceeding is wisely encouraging public testimony and comment on a matter of critical public importance which instills public trust in the process and decisions made.

³ Order No. 91683 on Stakeholder Proposals for Revision of Gas Policy, Case 9707, ML 319598 (June 13, 2025).

⁴ Office of People's Counsel Comments, Case 9707, ML 318634 (May 6, 2025), p. 5.

The Commission and Special Master should continue this practice of allowing for transparency and robust public engagement, including public hearings and the ability for the public to comment throughout the proceeding.

IV. Scope

Upgrade Maryland encourages the Commission to clarify that the scope of this proceeding is, while focused on planning as relates to Maryland's gas companies, sufficiently expansive to take into account the complexities that are inherent to an undertaking such as long-term gas planning. Realistically, this should include discussion of regulatory and policy action by both the PSC and other State Agencies, as well as contemplating the impact of future legislation in achieving an equitable resolution of long-term gas planning. We believe that the Commission has indicated support for inclusion of such matters in this proceeding by the inclusion of Issue 5 in Order 91719, where the Commission has contemplated the impacts of "increases or decreases in gas demand, current and future climate policies, and other future changes in legislation."⁵ By including sufficient scope to address these subjects in the proceeding, the Commission will allow for flexibility and creativity in addressing the issues that must be resolved to achieve a future gas transition that is equitable, just and reasonable to Maryland ratepayers, and achieve the State's legally enshrined climate targets.

Sincerely,

Bryan Dunning, Center for Progressive Reform

Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG Foundation

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry

Green & Healthy Homes Initiative

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa)

Maryland Legislative Coalition – Climate Justice Wing

National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of its low-income clients

⁵ Order no. 91791 on Instituting Long-Term Gas Planning Proceedings, Case 9707, ML 321696 (August 20, 2025), p. 7