

**DAVID S. LAPP**  
PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

**WILLIAM F. FIELDS**  
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

**JULIANA BELL**  
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

— **OPC** —  
**OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL**  
**State of Maryland**

6 ST. PAUL STREET, SUITE 2102  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202  
WWW.OPC.MARYLAND.GOV

**BRANDI NIELAND**  
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER  
ASSISTANCE UNIT

**CARISSA RALBOVSKY**  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

**OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL**

**C91H00**

**Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget Testimony  
Response to Department of Legislative Services Analysis**

**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
Public Safety, Transportation & Environment Subcommittee  
Senator Shelly Hettleman, Chair  
February 12, 2026**

**House Appropriations Committee  
Transportation & Environment Subcommittee  
Delegate Courtney Watson, Chair  
February 16, 2026**

The Department of Legislative Services ("DLS") concurs with the Governor's allowance. The Office of People's Counsel ("OPC") appreciates the careful review by Suveksha Bhujel, and respectfully agrees with the DLS recommendation.

## Analysis Responses

- 1. OPC should discuss whether it has continued to experience increased call volume in fiscal 2026 and the impact of the prolonged cold weather on the number of calls received in fiscal 2026.**

The Consumer Assistance Unit is maintaining a steady call volume driven primarily by rising utility costs. While winter weather typically triggers a surge in inquiries, BGE's current moratorium on service disconnections, implemented in January due to internal call center issues, has temporarily suppressed that spike. However, with the moratorium set to expire at the end of February, we anticipate a significant influx of urgent calls as BGE resumes standard collection and disconnection activities.