



Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB108 - Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency & Conservation Programs–Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing

Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing

Person

Submitting: Diana Younts, co-chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 10, 2022

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB108. MLC’s Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and grasstops organizations focused on climate justice.

Energy efficiency is a proven, cost-effective way to both lower the cost of energy and reduce carbon emissions. Since 2008, when the EmPOWER program was first enacted with a goal of reducing electricity usage by 15 percent by 2015, Maryland has benefited from a performance-target-driven energy efficiency portfolio.

Low-Income households have been left behind in this transition to greater energy efficiency because they tend to live in older homes that need health and safety remediation such as lead and mold removal before their homes can be weatherized.

As a result, because energy is a regressive cost, low-income households in Maryland dedicate 13% of their annual incomes to energy costs and pay 550% more as a percent of income than non low-income households. The majority of these (55%) are Black, Hispanic, or Asian households. Because of these and other barriers it is more difficult for low-income households to benefit from the EmPOWER program, as compared to high-income households.

The legislature now has an opportunity to fix this, by codifying a complementary performance driven goal for low-income housing. This new, common sense, ramp up to a 1% energy savings goal will allow Maryland to retrofit the 450,000 eligible low-income residents at least 100 years sooner than the 130 years projected under the current program.

Lessons learned from the rest of the portfolio, and from energy efficiency resource standards such as EmPOWER Maryland generally, show that they benefit from specific performance targets. Electric utilities under Maryland's portfolio are performance-driven, thanks to the initial 15% by 2015 target and the current 2% target. Neither are there performance goals for low-income households under programs administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. Now is the time to rectify that.

Energy efficiency has already saved Maryland consumers billions of dollars, reduced air pollution and created new economic activity including good jobs. A performance goal for low-income programs is overdue.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for HB108.

MLC Climate Justice Wing:

Assateague Coastal Trust
Maryland Legislative Coalition
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
WISE
Frack Free Frostburg
Mountain Maryland Movement
Clean Water Action
Howard County Indivisible
Howard County Sierra Club
Columbia Association Climate change and sustainability advisory committee
HoCo Climate Action
CHEER
Climate XChange - Maryland
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/
National Parks Conservation Association
350 Montgomery County
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Audubon Naturalist Society
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Environmental Justice Ministry
Coalition For Smarter Growth
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign
MoCo DCC
Potomac Conservancy
Casa de Maryland
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Clean Air Prince Georges
Laurel Resist
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Unitarian Universalist Legislative
Ministry of Maryland
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial Cafos
Wicomico NAACP
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Chispa MD
Climate Law & Policy Project
Maryland Poor Peoples Campaign
Labor for Sustainability
The Nature Conservancy
Clean Air Prince Georges
350 Baltimore
Maryland Environmental Health Network
Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis
Talbot Rising

Adat Shalom Climate Action
Mid-Atlantic Earth Holders
Climate Parents of Prince Georges
Echotopia
Maryland NAACP State Conference,
Environmental Justice Committee