



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: Bill Number HB079, Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Position: Support with Amendments

Hearing Date: January 31, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 079, Housing and Community Development -- Whole Home Repairs Act of 2023, with amendments to its goals and amendments to expand the number of programs covered by the bill. This legislation establishes a mechanism to coordinate the delivery of several funding programs to pay for whole home repairs for low-income families through local agencies. An important goal of the amended program is to lower the greenhouse gas emissions from low-income homes. It also supports work force development for these activities.

Many low-income homes in Maryland need significant investment to be healthy, efficient and electric. They often have lead, structural defects, inefficient or inoperable heating and cooling equipment, inadequate electrical service and health hazards. These can result in risks of asthma, falls for the elderly and lead poisoning for youth.

Because the appliances and HVAC is inefficient, low-income families face high energy burdens, averaging 12% of income, v. 2% for the general population. When low-income residents apply for energy efficiency funds through EmPOWER, about 30% are deferred due to structural issues.

Delivering energy efficiency to low-income households will be critical to meeting our climate goals. About 25% of families in Maryland are low income. The Maryland Commission on Climate Change in 2021 called for electrifying all low-income homes by 2030. In the recently passed Climate Solutions Now Act, Maryland set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% (from 2006) by 2031. With a goal of reducing greenhouse gases as a result of whole home retrofits, Maryland Sierra Club recommends adding: 4-2903 C (1) (IV) Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions as a sponsored amendment.

To accomplish this Maryland needs to braid together the numerous programs that can deliver healthy, safe, efficient and electric homes. By coordinating the significant resources from the the Weatherization Assistance Program, the Community Development Block grant program, the Lead Hazard Reduction Grant Program, the Lead Hazard Reduction Loan Program, the Maryland Housing Rehabilitation Program, and Neighborhood Revitalization Programs. Maryland Sierra Club recommends a sponsored amendment to the bill to add the following programs as 4-2901(D) (2) (VI) Inflation Reduction Act, (VII) the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, (VIII) EmPOWER, (VIV) SEIF and (X) the Climate Catalytic Capital Fund as a sponsored

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

amendment. These additions should lower bills for low-income residents and help Maryland achieve its climate goals. With these additions, Maryland should be able to improve the health impacts, structure, efficiency and reduce the climate impact of many low-income homes.

The complexity of applying for these grants and rebates can be daunting for anyone. By coordinating them in one local agency in each county, the burden of applying for these programs will be lowered for low-income families.

A challenge in delivering these retrofit programs is to develop a significant enough skilled work force to deliver the needed work for low-income families. The bill provides a mechanism to support work force development through local agencies.

Sierra Club Maryland supports the Whole Home Repairs Act of 2023, subject to the proposed amendments, as a significant step to deliver healthy, safe, efficient and climate friendly retrofits to low-income households in Maryland through a well trained work force.

Christopher Stix
Clean Energy Committee
stixchris@gmail.com

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org