

Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 1134 “Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use and Electric-Ready Standards”
Position: Support
Hearing Date: March 8, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club, together with the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, and the Maryland Legislative Coalition and its Climate Justice Wing, urge a favorable report for HB1134.

The bill would require that fossil fuels generally not be used by new residential and commercial buildings under seven stories as of October 1, 2025, and by new residential and commercial buildings that are seven stories or taller as of October 1, 2029. The bill also allows for possible waivers for buildings specifically designated to be occupied by commercial food establishments, laboratories, laundries, hospitals, and crematoriums. Waivers would be “limited to building systems and areas that cannot feasibly use energy from a source other than fossil fuels.” New buildings receiving waivers would need to be constructed to be electric-ready.

Electrifying Maryland’s buildings can play a significant role in helping our State achieve its climate goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% (from the 2006 level) by 2031, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2045. Fossil fuels burned in buildings (for furnaces, stoves, water heaters, and dryers) currently account for about 13% of Maryland’s greenhouse gas emissions.¹ It is important that an all-electric standard for new buildings be implemented soon in order to achieve our climate goals since, once installed, fossil-fuel furnaces and appliances are likely be used for up to 20 years or possibly longer.

The Maryland Commission on Climate Change called for an all-electric construction code by 2024 in its 2021 report.² That report indicated that all-electric residential construction is less expensive than construction of residences that use fossil fuels. Fuel costs for all-electric new residential and commercial buildings also are lower than for buildings using fossil fuels.

HB1134 can help Maryland achieve its climate goals by eliminating the use of fossil fuels in most new Maryland buildings by 2029. In addition, those new buildings that receive waivers will be electric-ready, and thus will be ready to subsequently convert to being all-electric either voluntarily or as may be required by state law or regulations.

For these reasons, the Maryland Sierra Club and the other organizations joining this testimony urge a favorable report on this bill.

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Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition

¹Maryland Commission on Climate Change, 2021 Annual Report, Appendix A: Building Energy Transition Plan <https://mde.maryland.gov/.../2021%20Annual%20Report%20Appendices%20FINAL.pdf>.

² Maryland Commission on Climate Change 2021 Annual Report <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Pages/MCCCReports-Archive.aspx>.