



TESTIMONY FOR SB0144

Public Utilities - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs - Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing

Bill Sponsor: Senator Feldman

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0144 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

In 2008, the EmPOWER program was first enacted with a goal of reducing electricity usage by 15% by 2015. Maryland has benefited this program and its work to achieve better energy efficiency. However, 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 to achieve energy efficiency.

As a result, 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.

This bill would codify a complementary performance driven goal for low-income housing. This will ramp up to a 1% energy savings goal in 2026 and 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. We believe that we should encourage programs that support our low-income residents and help them lower their energy costs and reap the benefits of energy efficiency.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.