



Testimony HB0397 – The WARMTH Act

Position: FAVORABLE

February 22, 2024

My name is Sonia Demiray, I am the co-founder of the Climate Communications Coalition and a resident of Frederick County. Our group wholeheartedly endorses the Thermal Energy Network Systems - Authorization and Establishment (Working for Accessible Renewable Maryland Thermal Heat).

The WARMTH Act fully aligns with the state’s climate action plans and the statutory requirement to reduce gas emissions to 60% over 2006 by 2031. It also helps us transition to a net-zero status by 2045.

While The Inflation Reduction Act provides an opportunity for historic investment in Maryland’s energy infrastructure, these funds do not provide enough investment to fully electrify all low- and moderate-income homes. Directing a portion of the IRA funds to be used as part of a network geothermal system will allow for full electrification and weatherization of an entire neighborhood, with funds coordinated by MEA and construction coordinated by MES. This can create a model for future electrification at scale.

The proposed pilot studies will be conducted in neighborhoods with 80% low- and moderate-income residents and will prioritize overburdened and underserved communities – this is in line with Justice 40 principles. In addition, the labor standards in the bill prioritize maintaining work for those who work on gas infrastructure and ensure prevailing wages for construction on the projects. Because Geothermal Heat Pumps (GHP) also known as GeoExchange operate in a similar way to gas distribution work, minimal additional training ensures job security. Workers on our gas system have kept us safe and warm for decades. We need to ensure their job security in a new clean thermal energy system.

There is no downside to the WARMTH Act. It simply provides a neighborhood scale approach to 100% clean energy. We urge a favorable vote on HB0397.

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