

February 20, 2024,

Written testimony for HB397 - Public Utilities - Thermal Energy Network Systems - Authorization and Establishment (Working for Accessible Renewable Maryland Thermal Heat (WARMTH) Act))¹

Position: Favorable

Submitted by: Denisse Guitarra, MD Conservation Advocate, Nature Forward



Dear Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

Nature Forward is the oldest independent environmental organization in the DC metropolitan region. For 126 years, Nature Forward has inspired residents of the greater Washington, DC, area to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through environmental education, advocacy, and outdoor experiences. In our conservation advocacy we prioritize human health & access to nature, biodiversity & habitats, fighting the climate crisis, and sustainable land use. We strongly support passage of **HB397 (WARMTH) Act**.

The recently published “Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Report” states that the buildings sector is the largest consumer of electricity in the state of Maryland.² By enacting HB397, Maryland will tackle and reduce one of its largest sectors currently producing the largest number of greenhouse gas emissions. This bill will also be aligned and with and help Maryland reach its climate reduction goal of reducing greenhouse gases by 60% of its 2006

¹ Available at: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/HB0397?ys=2024RS>

² Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Report. Dec 2023. Page 34. Available at: <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/Maryland%20Climate%20Reduction%20Plan/Maryland%27s%20Climate%20Pollution%20Reduction%20Plan%20-%20Final%20-%20Dec%2028%202023.pdf>



levels by 2031 and 100% by 2035.³ By increasing geothermal energy, we would also be electrifying the grid, Maryland will lead the way towards relying the use of fossil fuels and instead focus on using clean renewable energy.

Furthermore, HB397 if enacted, will designate money from the Inflation Reduction Act to install running, networked geothermal systems to heat and cool buildings and homes in target low- and moderate-income homes and under-resourced communities. This will then mean that we will be able to fill the climate gap and make clean energy sources like geothermal energy more available to more people especially those that cannot afford the expensive clean energy transition. Additionally, this bill will help start a pilot to electrify low-income homes so that they are no longer reliant on gas.

HB397 merits support because it makes use of the now available IRA funds to ensure and establish greater access to geothermal energy which is a renewable source of energy. On behalf of Nature Forward and our 28,000 members and supporters, we recommend that the Committee **SUPPORTS HB397**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Denisse Guitarra

MD Conservation Advocate

Nature Forward

³ Maryland's Climate Change Program. Available at:
<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/Pages/index.aspx>