

**Testimony Concerning Senate Bill 1023
Better Buildings Act of 2024**

Position: Support

Hearing date: March 4, 2024

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Personal Testimony by Bruce Davis

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Dear Committee Members. I write as a former science educator, retired lawyer, amateur nature photographer, nature lover, Unitarian Universalist, Climate Reality leader, grandfather, and concerned citizen. I've been around long enough to get some first-hand views of the effects of climate change – a close call from a flash flood near my former house, the absence of monarch butterflies in our pollinator garden, the ghost forests at Assateague Island, and the sunny day flooding in Annapolis. And I've read enough scientific and popular literature to appreciate the vast misery and suffering that climate change has caused elsewhere (one-third of Pakistan under water, for example) and will certainly cause here, unless we do something about it. And we know what we must do – stop burning fossil fuels for energy. This is why I urge you to issue a favorable report on the Better Buildings Act.

The General Assembly can be justly proud of the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA), passed in 2022 without the Governor's signature. The CSNA set goals of reducing Maryland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 60% (from 2006 levels) by 2031 and to net zero by 2045. In furtherance of those goals, the CSNA required (among other things) that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) study how to achieve these goals. MDE responded with Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, published in December 2023.

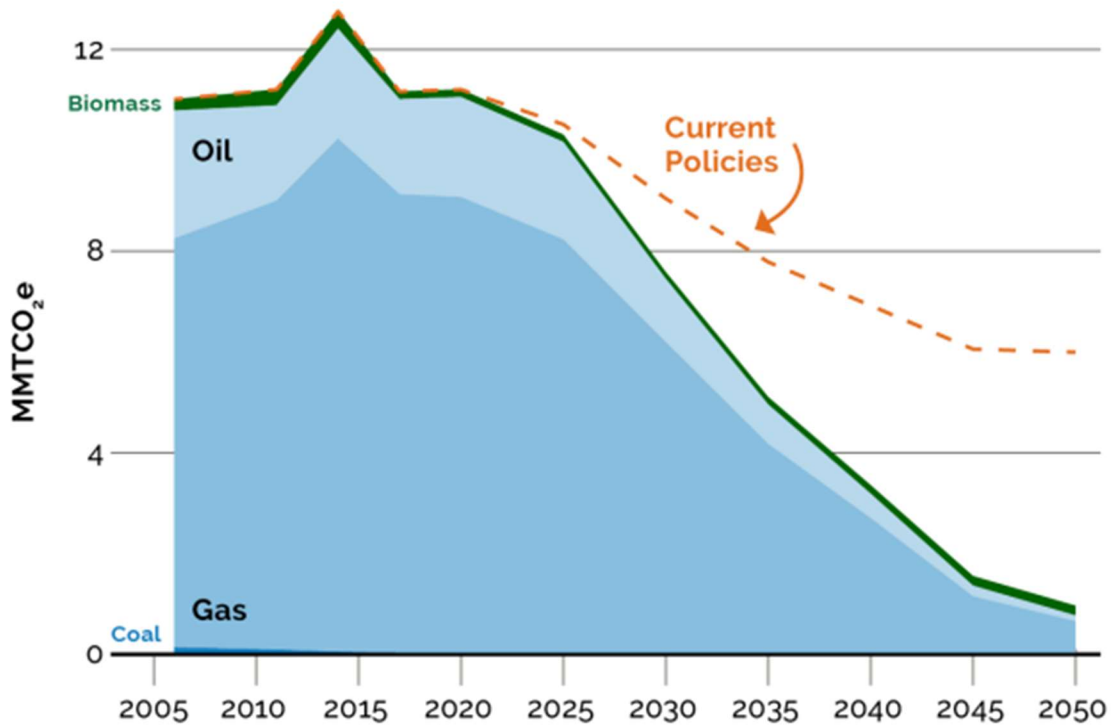
The Climate Pollution Reduction Plan proposes policies for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution attributable to the building sector. Direct fuel used in this sector accounted for 16% of Maryland's GHG pollution in 2020. The new or modified policies include:

- Strengthen EV-Ready Standards for New Buildings.
- Establish Zero-Emission Heating Equipment Standard (new) - Requires new space and water heating systems to produce zero direct emissions starting later this decade.
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- Clean Heat Standard (new) - Requires clean heat measures to be deployed in buildings at the pace required to achieve the state's GHG reduction requirements.

The Better Buildings Act puts these policies into action and augments them with policies to make certain buildings “solar-ready” – i.e. capable of accepting the installation of solar panels on roof areas. Key elements of the legislation are for new buildings to meet water and space heating demands without relying on fossil fuels, conservation of energy, and requiring certain buildings to meet electric- and solar-ready standards. The net effect of these provisions will be to reduce carbon pollution emissions both directly (through onsite combustion) and indirectly (through electric generation), improve air quality, and substantially lower utility costs for building owners, homeowners, renters, and tenants.

Enacting the Bill and related legislation to reform EmPOWER Maryland is essential to meeting Maryland’s climate goals established by the CSNA. This is illustrated in the chart below from Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan:

Figure 5: Direct GHG emissions from fuel use in Maryland’s building sector, historical and projected, from 2006 to 2050 based on current and new policies



As shown by the chart, current policies are inadequate to achieve Maryland’s GHG reduction goals. The Better Buildings Act, coupled with separate legislation to reform EmPOWER Maryland, is necessary to accomplish Maryland’s goals.

I urge the Committee to report the Bill favorably.