Testimony in Support of Better Buildings Act
SB 1023
Education Energy and Environment Committee
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On behalf of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund, I urge a favorable report on SB1023, the Better Buildings Act.

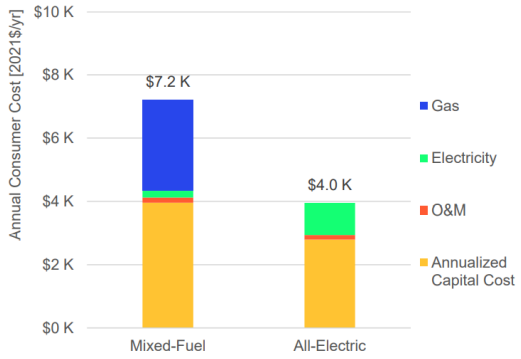
This important legislation would require that new buildings in Maryland meet their space and water heating needs without the use of fossil fuels. This policy costs nothing, saves Marylanders money,and reduces pollution. This policy would not require any changes in existing buildings and would only apply to new buildings. Importantly, the Better Buildings Act still allows buildings to be built with a gas stove. If you want a gas stove in your new home, you can still have one under this policy. Only furnaces and water heaters in new buildings are affected.

New York State, California, Washington State, and one hundred local jurisdictions across the country have already enacted this policy. That includes Howard County and Montgomery County Maryland. New polling found that 80% of Marylanders support the policies laid out in the Better buildings Act.

It costs less to construct a new building heated by electricity than it is to build a new building that is heated by gas. That is according to an analysis done by the Maryland Department of the Environment under the Hogan Administration. Requiring buildings to meet their space and water heating needs without the use of fossil fuels will reduce the cost of new construction, including the cost of new housing units. Below is a graph from that report:

All-electric design is expected to be the less expensive option

+ **All-electric new construction is cheaper than mixed-fuel new construction for single-family residential homes across all decarbonization scenarios due to both lower capital (with avoided gas connection) and operating costs**



Everytime we allow a new home to be built with a gas furnace we are driving up costs for Marylanders. Both because gas furnaces are more expensive to build and to operate and because someone will have to pay to retire those gas furnaces before the end of their useful lifetimes. Maryland has committed to having net zero carbon pollution by 2045, which is only 21 years away. We cannot achieve net zero emissions and heat our buildings with fossil fuels, which means fossil fuel infrastructure built today will have to be retired in less than 21 years. Fundamentally, no one buries a new pipe in the ground and expects to retire that pipe within 21 years. Allowing new construction to be heated by fossil fuels means that utilities will be installing pipes that will have to be retired in 21 years, a sunk cost that will ultimately be borne by ratepayers.

Decarbonizing Maryland's building stock over the next 21 years will be a challenge. The very first, easiest, and most obvious action to take is to stop making the problem worse. Requiring new buildings to meet space and water heating without fossil fuels will stop digging our hole any deeper than it already is. This is the low hanging fruit. The longer this action is delayed the harder all of our jobs become.

Ensuring new buildings aren't heated by fossil fuels will also improve outdoor air quality. Every fossil fuel powered furnace vents outside, and that vent is like a little smokestack that emits air pollutants like Nitrogen Dioxide. A recent study found that air pollution from heating buildings in Maryland is three times greater than all the air pollution from power plants in Maryland combined.

To save Marylanders money, reduce the cost of construction, clean up air pollution in the state, and make it easier to achieve our greenhouse gas reduction mandates, Maryland should pass the Better Buildings Act this year.

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