

March 4, 2024 HEARING DATE: March 6, 2024
BILL: HB1279 (Companion bill: SB1023)

TITLE: Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use, Energy

Conservation, and Electric- and Solar-Ready Standards (Better Buildings

Act of 2024)

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation Committee

SPONSORS: Delegates Boafo, Charkoudian, Foley, Guzzone, Hill, Kaiser, Ruth, Stein,

Terrasa, and Wu

Hello Chairman Korman, Vice Chairwoman Boyce, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael N. Wilcove. I live in District 16 in Rockville Maryland, and I am honored to be representing the Maryland Chapters of Citizens' Climate Lobby. Citizens' Climate Lobby is a national, nonpartisan, volunteer driven climate advocacy organization. In Maryland our Chapters consist of over 3000 residents from across the State.

Our Maryland Chapters support HB1279, the Better Buildings Act of 2024.

Our volunteers passionately advocate for solutions to the climate challenges we currently face. Our global dependency on burning fossil fuels is harming not only the climate, but our health, economy, and security.

The Better Buildings Act of 2024 is part of the solutions we need. It directs that the Department of Labor's Building Codes Administration modify the Maryland Building Performance Standards to require, as of October 1, 2026, that new buildings meet their water and space heating demands without the use of fossil fuels. Local jurisdictions may grant waivers for emergency backup systems. The Act also recognizes that specified businesses might utilize areas or systems that cannot feasibly use non-fossil fuels. Jurisdictions may grant waivers for those areas and systems, as well.

Beyond addressing water and space heating, the Act requires that new buildings, 20 stories or less with at least 20,000 square feet of continuous roof space, be solar ready. (Waivers could be granted by local jurisdictions for poor sun conditions.). New buildings must also be "EV ready" or "EV capable", *i.e.*, provide space and charging capabilities for electric vehicles. The specific requirements for electric vehicles vary by building type.

Finally, the Act sets out increasing "Site Energy Use Intensity (EUI)" targets, which new buildings over 25,000 square feet must meet. The targets commence October 2026. Between that date and September 2035, the

¹ It does **not** preclude gas stoves or restrict their installation.

² The Act identifies these businesses as commercial food establishments, laboratories, laundromats, hospitals, or crematoria. Financial considerations are explicitly not sufficient for a determination of feasibility.

targets increase every three years. The goal is net zero energy balance for building permit applications received

Decreased greenhouse gas emissions will improve our climate, environment, property, and health. With better building energy conservation and the use of highly efficient heat pumps, consumers would pay far less for heat and hot water than they do now. The Governor's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan estimates that the average Maryland family would save \$2,600 each year by adopting heat pumps. This is particularly important for lower-income households, which are often overburdened both by housing costs and energy costs

Maryland residents want effective and fair climate policies. The policies put forth by the Better Buildings Act help ensure we build things with emissions in mind moving forward. The Maryland Chapters of Citizens Climate Lobby urge a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB1279.

Respectfully submitted,

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