



CLIMATE COALITION

Montgomery County, MD

Date: March 4, 2024
Topic: Testimony for Better Buildings Act, HB1279
From: Kevin Walton, Climate Coalition of Montgomery County
To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Dear Chair Korman and Committee,

My name is Kevin Walton and I live in Montgomery County. I am representing the Climate Coalition of Montgomery County and the undersigned climate and environment focused member organizations. My experience with building energy performance and electrification issues includes serving as the Chair of Montgomery County Building Energy Performance Board, which advises on implementation of the county's Building Energy Performance Standards law, and I was co-Chair of the Market Rate Housing Subgroup of the Maryland Building Energy Performance Task Force.

The Climate Coalition of Montgomery County urges you to vote favorably for HB1279, the Better Buildings Act.

This act, which includes requiring electrification of space and water heating, aligns with the 2045 zero greenhouse gas emissions target in the Climate Solutions Now Act. It also aligns with the Maryland Building Energy Performance Standards targets of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. Addressing buildings is critical, as they account for 16% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions.

Similar actions have taken place in Montgomery County, where buildings account for almost 50% of greenhouse gas emissions. Montgomery County issued a Climate Action Plan with a goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions in the county by 2035. Many aspects of the state's laws and bills that are designed to address building emissions and energy efficiency have been enacted or are in process at our county's level, as these are the most effective tools we have to address greenhouse gas emissions by buildings.

In 2022, the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed a new building electrification law, which parallels the Better Building Act. This law requires the county to publish all-electric building standards for new buildings by the end of 2026. The new standards require systems, such as space and water heating, to use electricity rather than fossil fuels in new construction. By requiring only electric equipment, we avoid locking in greenhouse gas emissions for their 10 to 25-year usable life span, or alternatively, the building owner will not be hit with an added

expense imposed by the early replacement of the equipment to meet the target of zero greenhouse gas emissions.

In conclusion, the Better Buildings Act is forward thinking by addressing now the goals set over the next two decades for the state and its residents by the Climate Solutions Now Act. Therefore, the Climate Coalition of Montgomery County urges a favorable report for HB1279.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Kevin Walton

On behalf of the following Climate Coalition Member Organizations

350 Montgomery County

ACQ Climate (Ask the Climate Question)

Elders Climate Action

Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Friends of Sligo Creek

Green Sanctuary Committee of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Poolesville Green

Safe Healthy Playing Fields

Sugarloaf Citizens' Association

Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended/M-83 (TAME)

The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee (TPMEC)