



# Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

## Testimony in Support

### HB 1279 - Maryland Building Performance Standards - Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric- and Solar-Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2024)

To: Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee  
From: Phil Webster, PhD  
Lead Advocate, Climate Change  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.  
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **SB 1023 - Maryland Building Performance Standards - Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric- and Solar-Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2024)** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committee.

The UULM-MD is a statewide faith-based advocacy organization, with over 1,200 members, based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Unitarian Universalists believe in *“justice and equity in human relations”* and *“respect for the interconnected web of all existence of which we are a part.”*

The Better Buildings Act meets several very important goals in the effort to protect Maryland from the ravages of climate change and environmental injustice.

The Climate Solutions Now (CSN) Act of 2022 set very ambitious goals for reduction in emissions of greenhouse gasses. The original bill included language to decarbonize construction—both in new buildings and substantial modifications. This language was stripped from the bill and replaced with a study of the capabilities of the electrical grid. That study, known as the Brattle Report, has been completed and clearly states that the grid can handle the anticipated growth.

The Better Buildings Act reintroduces the requirements that were removed from the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

The Better Buildings Act would be the most cost effective legislative action that Maryland could take. The direct cost to the state budget is practically zero and the impacts would be significant for the climate.

Analysis from RMI.org shows that all-electric, single-family homes cost \$350-\$400 less to construct in Maryland than mixed-fuel homes, which use both gas and electricity. All-electric houses utilize heat pumps—which are 2–4 times more efficient than comparable gas appliances—for space heating and water heating. Consequently, a typical all-electric home in Maryland will save its owners \$510 on utilities each year. That’s 20% less than the annual utility bills for a Baltimore household living in a new home with gas. However, imagine what it will be when gas prices are expected to increase as much as 130% as we approach 2030!

Leakage of methane gas from an aging—and poorly maintained—infrastructure is also a significant problem. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) estimates the fossil fuel sector accounts for about 35% of anthropogenic methane emissions. Methane gas is an extremely potent greenhouse gas, over 80 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>. However, its atmospheric lifetime is approximately 10 years, as compared between 300 to 1000 years for CO<sub>2</sub>, which means we would get more immediate benefits from stopping the use of methane.

Decarbonization of all new buildings and substantial renovations is required to meet the legally mandated requirements of the Climate Solutions Now Act.

All-electric buildings are a health priority for Maryland. Burning fossil fuels for heating and hot water produces pollution that harms Marylanders, especially children, the elderly, people of color, and low-income households. Maryland can prioritize health by helping residents and businesses make the switch to all-electric appliances.

Adoption of the Better Buildings Act would:

- Save Marylanders money for both construction and utilities,
- Have negligible impact on the state budget
- Help meet the greenhouse gas emissions goals
- Provide healthier homes and safer workplaces

We strongly support this bill and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.

*Phil Webster*

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