



Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB1279 – Maryland Building Performance Standards-Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric-and Solar-Ready Standards (better Buildings Act of 2024)
Organization: The Jewish Community Relations Council, (JCRC) Howard County, MD
Submitting: Betsy Singer and Laura Salganik, Co-chairs
Position: FAVORABLE
Hearing Date: March 6, 2024

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Repair of the world (*tikkun olam*) is a guiding tenant of our Jewish faith. We are compelled to act to prevent massive changes to Earth’s climate as we face rising temperatures due to burning fossil fuels that trap greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere.

Fossil fuel furnaces and water heaters cause 17% of Maryland’s greenhouse gases. An efficient and affordable way to lower heat-trapping emissions is to switch from burning fossil fuels to heat and cool buildings and homes and instead use clean energy sources. We can do that through features of The Better Buildings Act, which carries no additional costs for the Maryland state government.

The bill requires that the state Building Code Administration adopt codes that require all **new** buildings, additions that increase heat loads by 30 % or more and significant improvements meet all energy demands of the building without the use of fossil fuels. Local jurisdictions could grant limited waivers including for cooking appliances and for backup power systems as well as for restaurants, labs, hospitals, and crematoriums. Buildings granted waivers would be required to be built electric-ready and must include automatic ventilation to maintain healthful indoor air quality.

Costs to build buildings to save energy and avoid fossil fuel combustion range from less expensive to slightly more. However, costs are falling and there are also generous new federal subsidies available to developers for high-efficiency buildings. Owners and tenants in new all-electric homes and buildings will also avoid the substantial cost increases projected for the delivery of methane gas in future years. Electric heat pump technology has advanced rapidly and has significantly reduced fuel costs and carbon emissions.

For these reasons, we strongly support SB 1023 and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.