

COMMISSIONERS FOR SOMERSET COUNTY

11916 SOMERSET AVENUE, ROOM 111
PRINCESS ANNE, MARYLAND 21853
TELEPHONE 410-651-0320, FAX 410-651-0366

COMMISSIONERS

CHARLES LAIRD, PRESIDENT
RANDY LAIRD, VICE-PRESIDENT
CRAIG N. MATHIES, SR.
ELDON WILLING
DARRYL K. WEBSTER



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
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COUNTY ATTORNEY
KIRK G. SIMPKINS

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB1279-Maryland Building Performance Standards-Fossil Fuel Use and Electric-Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2024)- **Letter of Opposition**

Dear Chairman Korman and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Commissioners for Somerset County, this is written to express our respectful, but strong opposition to House Bill 1279.

First and foremost, Somerset County has a long history of taking actions to reduce the effects of climate change. As you may know, a natural gas company recently completed the construction of a line with natural gas service already serving the Pharmaceutical Building at the University of Maryland – Eastern Shore, and work is in process to provide the service to Eastern Correctional Institution in Westover and the US 13 corridor. This gas line has been a priority of Somerset County for decades and we greatly appreciate the help the State provided in making this happen. For years, potential employers have been hesitant to locate in Somerset County due to its lack of natural gas service. Now that the line is finished, employers and property owners (including certain agri-businesses, the Princess Anne Industrial Park and home builders) are counting on the ability to connect to natural gas.

Secondly, as the Governor and the State of Maryland have placed a strong emphasis on affordable and adequate housing, implementing HB 1279 would significantly increase the cost of building affordable homes not just in Somerset County but across the state.

Respectfully, we believe that artificially choking off the ability of customers to choose natural gas will defeat all of the hard work the Somerset County has expended over the last several years to bring the natural gas line to the County. Furthermore, the increased costs of building a home to the standards in HB1279 would further hinder development in Somerset County. We ask that you please consider our serious concerns as you review and debate HB1279.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Charles Laird'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Charles' being the most prominent part.

Charles Laird
President