



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 27, 2025

Committee: Senate – Education, Energy, and the Environment

Bill: SB 804 - Maryland Building Performance Standards - Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric- and Solar-Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2025)

Position: Unfavorable

Reason for Position:

On behalf of the Maryland Municipal League (MML), representing 161 local governments across the state, we respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 804. While we understand the intent behind the bill, to push for cleaner, more energy-efficient buildings, there are significant concerns regarding the mandate's impact on local governments and their ability to effectively manage and enforce the new building standards.

Senate Bill 804 imposes a significant burden on local municipalities that may not have the resources or infrastructure to effectively implement and enforce these new energy standards. Local governments are already tasked with managing multiple aspects of urban planning, zoning, public safety, and infrastructure. The addition of new and complex building requirements related to fossil fuel elimination and electric- and solar-readiness will place an overwhelming strain on local code enforcement officers and staff. Many municipalities, particularly smaller jurisdictions, simply do not have the technical expertise or resources to adequately enforce these mandates without significant additional support from the state. The bill introduces ambiguity regarding the scope of local authority in issuing waivers and enforcing standards. While local jurisdictions are allowed to issue waivers for emergency power systems, the criteria for these waivers are not clearly defined. This lack of clarity could lead to inconsistent application of the law across the state, creating confusion for developers, municipalities, and residents alike. Local governments may be put in a position where they must make difficult decisions without clear guidance on how to balance energy efficiency with critical community needs.

The timeline established in the bill for compliance with these energy standards is overly aggressive. The Department of Labor is required to adopt regulations by October 2025, leaving local governments with little time to adapt to the new rules and train staff adequately. This rushed timeline could result in hasty decisions and increased costs for municipalities, ultimately detracting from the goals of the bill.

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The bill does not provide sufficient financial support to local governments to assist with the implementation and enforcement of these energy standards. Without dedicated funding or resources, municipalities may be forced to divert funds from other critical projects to comply with this unfunded mandate, negatively affecting other essential community services.

The Maryland Municipal League believes that while the goals of SB 804 are laudable, the bill as currently written imposes unreasonable burdens on local governments and does not provide the necessary support to ensure successful implementation. We respectfully urge the committee to consider these concerns and either amend the bill to provide adequate resources and support for local governments or delay its implementation to allow for a more measured and collaborative approach.

For more information, please contact Tyler Alexis Brice, Manager of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at tylerb@mdmunicipal.org or 254-652-8110.

Thank you for your consideration.

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