

**Testimony Concerning Senate Bill 0804**  
**Better Buildings Act of 2025**  
**Position: Support**  
**Hearing date: February 26, 2025**  
**Kelsey Ritter**

**The Honorable Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**Maryland General Assembly**  
**Annapolis, Maryland**

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Kelsey Ritter, and I am a student from Atholton High School in Howard County Maryland, and a member of Electrify HoCo. I am writing to urge you to pass the Better Buildings Act (HB973/SB804), not just because it makes sense politically, economically, or scientifically—but because my generation is running out of time to fix a crisis that is not ours.

I'm 16. I can't vote. I don't get a say in who represents me or the policies that shape my future. But I do know this: the decisions made today will determine the kind of world I inherit. And right now, that world is burning, flooding, and suffocating under the weight of outdated, fossil-fuel-dependent systems that we have the power to change.

I grew up in Maryland, where we've seen firsthand what inaction looks like. I can remember spring days when the air was so thick with Canadian wildfire smoke, making it dangerous even to go outside. I have seen Ellicott City flood so intensely that entire streets became rivers. These disasters are no longer distant threats. They are here. And they are happening with increasing frequency because we continue to build and live in ways that ignore the realities of climate science.

More than 100 state and local governments, including jurisdictions in Colorado, California, and New York, have already taken similar action to require all-electric new construction. Here in Maryland, Montgomery, and Howard Counties have led the way with local policies, and the state has already committed to eliminating on-site emissions for large buildings over 35,000 square feet by 2040. However, to truly meet our climate goals and protect our communities, we must extend these standards to all new buildings, ensuring they are built to be energy-efficient and free from fossil fuel reliance from the start.

The building sector accounts for an overwhelming 16% of Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions. Every time we approve new fossil fuel infrastructure, we are locking in decades of emissions, pushing us further into climate catastrophe. It isn't just about reducing emissions. Instead, it's about rejecting the idea that we have to be trapped in a cycle of environmental destruction when we have the technology, the knowledge, and the resources to build differently.

Some will argue that transitioning to all-electric buildings is too expensive. But the reality is, that doing nothing is far more costly. Maryland families will save money with high-efficiency electric appliances, and as our grid moves toward renewable energy, those savings will only grow. More

importantly, the cost of inaction—on healthcare, disaster recovery, and infrastructure repair—is staggering. I may not be able to vote yet, but I refuse to be silent about the policies that will shape my future. The Better Buildings Act is not just legislation—it is a necessary step toward a future where Maryland leads with innovation rather than clings to the past. I urge you to pass this bill. Do it for public health. Do it for economic resilience. Do it for my generation—because we deserve a future that isn't defined by the mistakes of the past.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kelsey Ritter,  
Student, Sophomore at Atholton High School  
Member, Electrify HoCo