

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 804
Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use,
Energy Conservation, and Electric – and Solar-Ready Standards
(Better Buildings Act of 2025)

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 27, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of this committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB 804– The Better Buildings Act of 2025. This bill would require newly constructed buildings and major renovations in Maryland to meet water and space heating demands and laundry needs without the use of costly, health-harming fossil fuels. Additionally, it would also require new buildings to incorporate energy efficiency, ensuring more affordable, comfortable, and resilient homes.

The Better Buildings Act honors the General Assembly’s commitment to “move toward [the] broader electrification of... new construction,” following a feasibility study¹. In December 2023, the Public Service Commission (PSC) released that study. The PSC found that a high electrification scenario in the State would only moderately increase the demand in electricity, while significantly reducing the demand on gas. Specifically, the State’s electric grid would see a maximum growth of “2.1%,” which is comparable to the average growth of Maryland’s electric grid over the past 40 years. Additionally, building sector gas demand would be reduced by about 31% by 2031.

After much research and patience, it is time for the General Assembly to act on its promise and pass the Better Buildings Act. The longer we wait to electrify our buildings and make our energy grid cleaner, the harder it will be to make the transition in the future. If passed, SB 804 has four key parts to ensure that our buildings are efficient and wired for the clean energy economy that is forthcoming.

1. The bill requires that all new buildings or significant improvements secure their energy from non-fossil fuel sources. This means that appliances like home furnaces and hot water heaters installed in new construction would have to be electric. In addition, it

¹ codified in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

allows jurisdictions to make exceptions for back-up generators, cooking stoves, and other buildings that have a demonstrated need for fossil fuels.

2. The bill also requires new buildings to meet energy efficiency requirements according to the International Energy Conservation Code. Specifically, new buildings must achieve a 65% energy efficiency rate if their building permit applications are received after 2033.
3. Another requirement is that all new buildings which have more than 20,000 sq/ft of clear roof space and will be 20 stories or less in height, be solar ready.
4. Lastly, there is an electric ready requirement to ensure that building owners can transition to fully electric buildings when desired with little upfront costs.

SB 804 represents a significant advancement in Maryland's efforts to achieve its climate goals. This bold and ambitious initiative demonstrates the proactive approach necessary to enhance energy efficiency and ensure buildings are prepared for electrification. Since 2022, we have conducted comprehensive studies and carefully considered exceptions to the proposed requirements. Furthermore, this transition will be implemented gradually to ensure proper execution of the new standards, allowing builders the necessary time to adapt and prepare for the shift to all-electric construction.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB 804.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "With kindest regards,".

Benjamin Brooks