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I am a resident of District 9B in Howard County. I wish to submit testimony in favor of HB0973, the Better Buildings Act of 2025.

Maryland has a statutory 2045 carbon neutrality goal. How can we meet such a goal if we continue to build new buildings that get their water heated and building heat supplied by fossil fuels? This must change.

My husband and I were one of the first people to buy a house in the Dorsey Hall neighborhood of Columbia in 1980. It was an all electric home because there were no gas delivery lines in this new neighborhood at that time. We were happy to have a modern electric heat pump that both heated and cooled our home and an electric hot water heater. Those appliances did their job well at an affordable price.

Then BGE installed gas delivery lines in our neighborhood in the mid-nineties and we made a decision I've come to regret: we joined most of our neighbors in switching to gas. Al Gore's "Earth in the Balance" had just come out, and climate change was only beginning to be discussed. The arguments were that gas was cheaper and that the air coming out of our heating vents would feel warmer.

But now I do know that burning gas – methane – puts climate warming emissions into our atmosphere. And my desire for warmer air coming out of our vents? We now set our thermostat at 66 degrees in the winter and wear sweaters! And the argument for switching to gas that it is cheaper no longer holds as its price has increased dramatically!

So recently we replaced our gas hot water heater with an electric HEAT PUMP hot water heater – a type of hot water heater I didn't know existed until two years ago. We got a 30% federal tax credit on its purchase due to the Inflation Reduction Act and also a state tax credit. In 2024 we bought an air source heat pump to replace our gas furnace and air conditioner after finding that new heat pumps are far more efficient than the one we had in the eighties and work at far lower temperatures without triggering back-up electric resistance heating. We're working on filing our 2024 federal tax return and anticipate getting a \$2000 tax credit for our heat pump purchase. The company from which we purchased the heat pump reduced our cost by the amount of the state credits for the heat pump and smart thermostat that they will apply for on our behalf. "Thank you" to the state of Maryland for wisely passing a law to incentivize these purchases and make it possible for lower income households to afford them.

What I've learned from this is that heat pumps are a reliable and efficient way to heat and cool homes and heat hot water. Even the really old ones worked well – heat pumps are not a new technology! But new ones work even better. There's no technological reason for not requiring it in most new buildings. I was at a climate conference a couple years ago and asked an architect who'd been one of the speakers if heat pumps could work to heat large, multi-story buildings. The answer was "yes" and that they worked especially well if the new building had been designed from the ground up with energy efficiency and heat pumps in mind, and that's just what the Better Buildings Act would require.

What do I say to people who want to buy a new gas-powered home? Just as I wasn't able to buy a new gas-powered home in Dorsey Hall in 1980, and just as there are still many places in Maryland that don't have gas delivery lines, you won't be able to buy a new gas-heated home in Maryland (with some exceptions) when the Better Buildings Act is passed. But your new home will be healthier, more energy efficient, less expensive to operate, and quite comfortable. And if you really want a gas-powered home, the Better Buildings Act does not require existing homes powered by fossil fuel to convert to all-electric.

Thank you for your consideration of the Better Buildings Act. This bill is essential for reducing Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions. It is the bill I most want to see the Maryland General Assembly pass this year.