

HB0973 - SUPPORT

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HB0973 - Better Buildings Act of 2025

Meeting of Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation Committee

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Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am writing to strongly urge a favorable report on HB0973. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland for forty years. As someone who is deeply concerned about the existential threat posed by climate change, I regularly volunteer with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) and strongly consider candidates' records on climate change when deciding how to vote.

In addition to helping us to meet the greenhouse gas emission reductions we committed to in the Climate Solutions Now Act, the Better Buildings Act will reduce energy costs and improve public health by requiring all newly constructed buildings to be heated without the use of fossil fuels.

In terms of meeting our climate goals, electrifying all new construction should be a no-brainer. More than half of Maryland's energy-related greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, 2/5s of that from burning fossil fuels for heating and cooking. Continuing to install gas hookups to new construction would lock us into several more decades of emissions and derail our climate commitments.

Switching to electricity for heating and cooking is becoming increasingly economical with the availability of improved technologies. In trying to do our part for the climate in our 103-year-old house, my husband and I switched to energy efficient heat pumps this year, leading to a noticeable reduction in our heating bills. As everyone on this committee can attest, the early months of 2025 have put any heating system to the test and we have been happy with the outcome. And once summer comes in, our systems become highly effective air conditioners. As soon as our water heater and stove reach the ends of their life spans, we plan to replace them as well with electric appliances.

Research has increased our awareness of the threat to health posed by gas appliances, which emit carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, benzene and formaldehyde into our homes. A study published in the International Journal of Epidemiology found children living in a home with a gas appliance were 42% more likely to develop asthma than those without such exposure. Gas stoves leak chemicals, including the carcinogen benzene, even when turned off. Meanwhile fossil fuel furnaces in Maryland are responsible for three times as much pollution as all the state's power plants combined. Getting fossil fuels out of our buildings makes sense from an economic, health, and climate viewpoint.

Maryland would hardly be an outlier in approving this legislation. Similar laws have been enacted by more than 100 state and local governments, including several Maryland counties.

At a time when our nation's efforts to fight climate change are under assault, Maryland needs to stand firm and meet our commitments. This effort would be a win for the economy and public health as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring my concerns to the committee's attention in support of HB 0973.