



FAVORABLE TESTIMONY for HB 973

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

House - Environment and Transportation Committee

February 26th, 2025

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

Maryland Climate Partners is pleased to offer favorable testimony in support of HB 973, the Better Buildings Act. Maryland Climate Partners is a coalition of over one hundred environmental, faith, consumer advocacy, and social justice organizations focused on ensuring equitable implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act.

The Better Buildings Act has three key provisions for all new buildings: 1) meeting space-heating, water-heating, and laundry requirements without the use of fossil fuels; 2) energy conservation requirements; and 3) electric-ready and solar-ready requirements to ensure future upgrades for building owners are low-cost. Taken together, these three provisions will help the environment, health, and pocketbooks of Marylanders.

The Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA) of 2022, and subsequent Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, propose strategies for Maryland to reduce its carbon impact and to improve public health and economic prosperity for all Marylanders. Pollution from burning fossil fuels to heat buildings accounted for 16% of pollution in 2020. The climate plan recommends strategies to transition to electric appliances, lauding the greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions as well as increased efficiency. The Better Buildings Act takes the critical step of ensuring that new buildings are designed to meet their space and water heating needs without the use of fossil fuels.

CSNA directed the Public Service Commission to assess the feasibility of an all-electric construction standard. The study came out in December 2023 and showed Maryland electric systems can handle high levels of electrification through 2031, enabling the Maryland building sector to decarbonize at a pace consistent with meeting the goals of 60% GHG reduction by 2031.

By requiring all newly constructed buildings to meet their space and water heating needs without the use of fossil fuels, HB 973 will encourage the use of electric equipment. The bill also includes a provision of solar readiness for buildings under 20 stories tall so that we can deploy even more clean energy options. Maryland Climate Partners robustly supports this bill, because building decarbonization is essential for meeting the state's codified GHG reduction targets, creating healthier communities, and mitigating climate change to prevent the worst impacts of a destabilized climate.

This legislation is popular nationwide, with the state of California and New York City being two of the biggest adopters of new building electrification bills. Furthermore, Howard County and Montgomery County have already enacted versions of the Better Buildings Act along with the Maryland Department of Energy giving its endorsement to the legislation.

For these reasons, Maryland Climate Partners respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 973.