Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of HB 973 -
Maryland Building Performance Standards - Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric- and Solar-Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2025)

TO:	Chair Korman and members of the Environment & Transportation Committee
FROM:	Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate on Climate Change Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports dramatic improvements in the construction and operation for new buildings in Maryland and urges approval and rapid implementation of **HB 937- (Better Buildings Act of 2025)**

The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on Unitarian Universalist Values, including justice, equity, and interdependence. Working to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience for climate change is central to our beliefs.

The Better Buildings Act does just what its name implies–it requires most new buildings to be *built smart from the start*, with better energy conservation and **no on-site fossil fuel combustion for space and water heating**. It will encourage the use of electric equipment and includes a provision of solar-readiness for buildings under 20 stories tall for future deployment of even more clean energy options.

HB 973 - implements a simple vision of how we want our public and private buildings to be –less expensive to operate AND much better for the climate crisis we face. It is a common-sense bill that ensures that new construction utilizes highly efficient, cost-effective electric appliances that use less energy, lower utility bills, and are less polluting.

The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 requires that the state be net-zero for emissions of Greenhouse Gases in 2045. Transitioning to electrical appliances for space and water heating for new buildings,will put the State on the path to meeting this critical requirement.

Studies have shown that the costs for construction of buildings with electrical appliances are comparable to fossil fuel buildings, while the operating cost can be substantially less. Today's heat pumps are three to four times more efficient than fossil fuel heating equipment, and remain two to three times more efficient even in winter weather.

According to a report issued by The Maryland Public Service Commission, the grid can handle increased high rates of electrification in buildings, and transportation. The Better Buildings Act only affects new buildings, which is a small subsection of the entire building stock. If the grid can handle economy-wide electrification it can more than handle new building electrification, because it represents a small percent of the total building stock in the state.

Any building constructed today with fossil fuel appliances will emit Greenhouse Gases for as long as those appliances are functional, possibly for 20 years. Upgrading to electrical appliances at that time would be more expensive than just replacing the original equipment because of the cost of retrofitting of the electrical infrastructure.

The Better Buildings Act would:

- Put Maryland on the path to meeting Greenhouse Gas guidelines of the Climate Solutions Now.
- Cost about the same as fossil fuel based buildings.
- Be less expensive to operate.
- Be less costly to upgrade when the original heating appliances reach their end of life.

UULM-MD strongly supports the **Better Buildings Act** and urges a FAVORABLE Committee report.

Phil Webster, PhD
Lead Advocate, Climate Change UULM-MD