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TESTIMONY ON HB#0973 -
FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0973, Maryland Building Performance Standards - Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric- and Solar-Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2025)

The American Lung Association has studied extensively the impact of burning fossil fuels within indoor spaces on health. ¹

Two thirds of U.S. households burn fuel in their homes. These households burn methane (commonly referred to as “natural gas”), wood, propane, heating oil or other fuel to heat their homes and water, dry their clothes and cook their food. Burning fuel produces emissions that are harmful to human health and the environment. Some types of appliances, including cook stoves, release their emissions directly into the home, where they are inhaled by residents. Other appliances, such as furnaces and water heaters, when installed and operated as designed, vent most combustion by-products to the outside, where they contribute to air pollution and climate change.

According to EPA, indoor levels of pollutants may be two to five times — and sometimes more than 100 times — higher than outdoor levels. Since most people spend about 90 percent of their time indoors, policies and practices that reduce the emission of combustion pollutants in homes are an important step forward in protecting public health.

My Jewish tradition summarizes a reason we need to protect our bodies from this pollution. ²

It calls it *sh'mirat haguf* – literally, guarding the body. In the book of Deuteronomy, we find the verse, “Guard yourself and guard your soul very carefully” (Deut. 4:9). Biblical commentators have understood this passage to be the religious imperative for taking care of both body and soul. As the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria put it, “The body is the soul’s house. Therefore, shouldn’t we take care of our house so that it

¹ <https://www.lung.org/getmedia/da394c1a-200e-4c89-9947-7ecb1a26571a/The-Health-Impact-of-Combustion-in-Homes.pdf>

² <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-perspectives-health-wellness/what-jewish-tradition-says-about-health-and-wellness#:~:text=In%20the%20book%20of%20Deuteronomy,body%20is%20the%20soul's%20house.>

doesn't fall into ruin?"

The Journal Solar Reviews has noted the *Advantages and Disadvantages of Fossil Fuels: Do the Cons Outweigh the Pros?*³

- Fossil fuels have been powering the world for decades, making them cheap and reliable since the infrastructure is already in place for their continued use.
- Some of the disadvantages of fossil fuels include that they contribute to climate change, they are a non-renewable resource, they are unsustainable, they cause land degradation, and are accident-prone.
- Renewable energy technologies provide an alternative to fossil fuels that is safer, healthier, and better for the planet

This bill makes the moral statement that Maryland understands the problems with fossil fuel use and will take steps to mitigate the problems associated with it. It will accomplish that goal by requiring the Maryland Department of Labor to adopt, by October 1, 2025, and as part of the Maryland Building Performance Standards, energy conservation requirements, an electric- and solar-ready standard for certain buildings, and a requirement that new buildings and significant improvements meet all laundry, water, and space heating demands of the building without the use of fossil fuels.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0973.

³ <https://www.solarreviews.com/blog/fossil-fuels-pros-and-cons>