

Preservation Maryland

Before the
Environment and Transportation Committee
March 4, 2020

Pertaining To: HB1490, Clean Buildings Jobs Act of 2020

SUPPORT

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of history and preservation in Maryland.

Preservation Maryland is the statewide voice for historic preservation that works to protect the best of Maryland. Since 1931, we have worked tirelessly to protect the places, stories and communities in Maryland that matter. Through our Smart Growth Maryland program, we advocate for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns.

Buildings consume nearly half of the nation's energy, with much of that energy wasted through inefficient design and operation. Reducing emissions from buildings is an essential strategy to Maryland's Green House Gas Emissions Reduction Act goals. To achieve this, we must establish a baseline for what greenhouse gas emission levels currently are and then set goals for their reduction. HB1490 would help do just that.

HB1490 requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to adopt regulations on monitoring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions for privately owned buildings over 25,000 square feet. To establish a baseline for current average greenhouse gas emissions, such buildings would begin to report their emissions in 2021. The Department would then create rules for a stepped approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, starting in 2025. Goals would be set at a 40% reduction by 2030 and at least 80% by 2050.

While it is necessary for Maryland to work toward these emission reductions goals, there would be exemptions or delays from compliance, such as financial distress. Knowing the financial burden this may put on property owners, HB1490 would authorize the Maryland Department of Energy to coordinate with the Strategic Energy Investment Fund to establish an incentive and financial assistance program to help qualifying building owners reach the established energy standard goals.

Additionally, this bill would establish the Building Energy Performance Task Force to develop metrics and recommendations for retrofits to improve energy efficiency and reduce GHGs for buildings listed in the state or national historic place registry, or on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, in ways that will not compromise historical integrity.

Helping Maryland to achieve energy efficiency standards is essential and HB1490 helps provide a reasonable path toward that goal. Therefore, we respectfully urge the committee to return a favorable report on HB1490.