

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB0462 “Low-Income Housing – Energy Performance Targets”

Submitted by: Donald M. Goldberg, Executive Director

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Climate Law & Policy Project urges a favorable report on SB462. This bill would help Maryland achieve its Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act targets, would improve the health of Maryland’s low income residents by reducing household mold and other health hazards—a necessary step to improving household energy efficiency—and would save money for low income households in Maryland by reducing their energy costs.

For too long, low-income households have been unable to receive their share of benefits provided by Maryland’s clean energy and energy efficiency programs. The EmPower Maryland Program is required to improve statewide energy efficiency by 2% per year, but low-income households in Maryland receive a very small fraction of that improvement as a percentage of their energy consumption. This disparity is exacerbated by the fact that low-income homeowners pay, on average, a much higher percentage of their disposable income for heating, cooling and other energy needs than higher income homeowners.

We understand the difficulties that are frequently encountered when trying to improve the efficiency of homes that some homeowners, due to economic hardship, have been unable to maintain in good condition. The inability of some homeowners to keep their homes in good working order is all the more reason for the State to assist them to lower their energy bills and with other repairs to make these homes safe and efficient.

In short, it is not conscionable to withhold assistance to low-income households from Maryland’s energy programs that is readily available to Maryland’s wealthier citizens.

We urge a favorable report on SB462.