HB806: Building Standards and Emissions Reductions
Appropriations Committee
March 1, 2022
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FAVORABLE

Maryland PIRG is a state based, small donor funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state. For fifty years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.

Environment Maryland is a citizen-based environmental advocacy organization. We work to protect clean air, clean water, and open space.

Maryland could see a critical reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and gas usage if it electrifies all of its buildings during the next 30 years. In 2021 Maryland PIRG Foundation and Environment Maryland Research and Policy Center released **Electric Buildings: Repowering Homes and Businesses for Our Health and Environment**, which found that completely repowering Maryland's homes and businesses with electricity by 2050 is expected to result in emissions reductions equal to taking more than 1 million cars off the road.

To truly reap the climate and clean air benefits of electric buildings, we also need to make sure that public buildings are included in our plan to electrify Maryland's buildings.

HB806 sets important provisions to make schools and other public buildings more towards clean electrification by setting goals for emissions reductions and requiring some new public buildings be energy efficient and all-electric.

Maryland PIRG and Environment Maryland support this bill and any provisions that move us to more aggressively transition to cleaner, safer electric buildings. In addition, we support the amendments being recommended by the Climate Partners Table.

Gas expansion, in particular, is bad for public health, the planet, and ratepayers who must bear the long term financial responsibility for today's infrastructure investments. **The best way to protect ratepayers from stranded costs associated with fossil fuel infrastructure is to not build it in the first place.**

Burning fossil fuels in our buildings is bad for our health and environment, and it contributes to dangerous air pollution in our state. The direct use of gas, heating oil, and propane in buildings, primarily for space and water heating, accounted for 13% of Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2017.

Throughout Maryland, children and families are suffering from the damaging effects of living with unhealthy air quality. In October, Maryland PIRG Foundation and Environment Maryland

Research and Policy Center released "Trouble in the Air," which outlined elevated air pollution days throughout the state. The Baltimore area experienced 43 elevated air pollution days in 2020, and many metropolitan areas throughout Maryland faced similar levels of air pollution. Elevated air pollution increases the risk of premature death, asthma attacks, cancer and other adverse health impacts.

In the American Lung Association's 2021 State of the Air Report, six Maryland counties received an "F" for air quality.

The risks of fossil fuel powered buildings impact the climate and the health of Maryland children and families at all stages of power production, from extraction to transport to running appliances like gas furnaces and water heaters.

A 2019 study that looked at five major urban areas on the East Coast, including Baltimore, and found these urban areas emit more than twice the amount of methane previously estimated by the EPA, with most of these emissions coming from leaks of gas systems in homes and businesses, as opposed to natural sources or landfills.

Fossil fuels also pose a risk to our communities, as seemingly every year we hear of another explosion. The August 2020 explosion that leveled homes, killing 2 people in Northwest Baltimore, the August explosion in Columbia, Maryland that leveled a shopping center, the 2016 explosion in the Flower Branch explosion in Silver Spring Maryland that killed 7 people and left dozens hospitalized, and many other explosions big and small.

Finally, we are seeing the impacts of fossil fuel appliances directly inside of our buildings. According to the Rocky Mountain Institute, air pollution from burning fuels in buildings led to an estimated 627 early deaths in Maryland and seven billion in health impact costs in 2017. We also know that appliances, including gas stoves (which are exempt from this bill) can emit a suite of unhealthy gasses, including nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and formaldehyde, all of which can exacerbate respiratory issues and lead to heart disease and cancer. Finally, Rocky Mountain Institute has shown that gas stoves alone may contribute to levels of air pollution indoors that would be illegal outdoors. Long term, we need a more aggressive plan to transition away from gas stoves towards safer alternatives.

HB806 will:

- Alter the definition of "high performance buildings" to include schools and other public
- Require all existing state and local government buildings to reduce their direct greenhouse gas emission to net-zero by 2035
- Require all new state buildings and local government buildings that are at least 50% funded by the state to be built to an all-electric code for water and space heating

We respectfully request a favorable report.