



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood**

**Committee:** Appropriations

**Testimony on:** HB0365 – Public School Construction - Fossil-Fuel Based Energy Systems Costs - Prohibition (Green School Construction Act of 2022)

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 8, 2022

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Marc Korman

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 3000 members across all districts in Montgomery County as well as a number of nearby jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0365 because transitioning schools away from fossil fuels and to renewable energy is critical for Maryland's ability to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and address the climate crisis.

The Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC) has recommended that all sectors of Maryland's economy, including buildings, reduce greenhouse gas emissions 100% by 2045. These recommended goals are embodied in other legislation introduced this session, notably in SB0528, Climate Solutions Now Act, introduced in the Senate by Senator Pinsky, and in HB0708, Comprehensive Climate Solutions, introduced in the House by Chairman Barve and Delegate Stein.

Buildings, through direct and indirect emissions, produce 40 percent of Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions. Maryland's 1400 existing schools are overwhelmingly powered by gas-fired boilers and contribute to this problem. These existing schools and planned new schools must be part of the solution. Transitioning school heating and cooling systems to zero emission systems, such as air and ground source heat pumps and solar, is critical to Maryland reaching its climate goals.

HB0365 will directly address the need to reduce greenhouse gas emission from schools by prohibiting use of state matching funds for the installation of fossil-fuel based energy systems (typically gas-fired) in new and existing K-12 schools.

Furthermore, passage of HB0365 will ultimately save money for Maryland schools. As Maryland transitions to decarbonized buildings, the MCCC has projected that gas delivery rates could increase more than two to five times the current rate for consumers, including schools, left on the gas system. Therefore, it is important from a cost perspective alone that all Maryland schools transition away from fossil fuels.

The Interagency Commission on School Construction encourages school districts to set targets to increase renewable energy and to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, and requires schools to perform analyses of life-cycle costs and evaluations of alternative energy systems before being

allowed to use state funds for installation of fossil fuel systems. However, thus far, in doing those analyses, schools have not factored in the predicted dramatic cost increases for gas delivery systems and thus have not adequately accounted for the escalating costs of gas. HB0365 will address this shortcoming.

Several net-zero ready schools (i.e., schools that are designed to be ready for the installation of photovoltaic systems in order to become net-zero) are already in the design process or under construction on the Eastern Shore, an area that lacks a gas infrastructure. Thus, in an area already facing high fossil-fuel costs (oil and propane), school districts are choosing to build schools designed to be energy efficient and solar ready.

HB0365 will make sure that all schools in Maryland transition to renewable energy. This is a commonsense measure that is good for kids, the environment, and the future. Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0365 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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