



OUR MISSION:

Working to enhance the economic prosperity of greater Silver Spring through robust promotion of our member businesses and unrelenting advocacy on their behalf.

**HB708 – Comprehensive Climate Solutions
Economic Matters Committee
March 4, 2022
UNFAVORABLE**

On behalf of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, representing 400 member organizations, including very small businesses with fewer than ten employees and several nonprofits, in the greater Silver Spring area of Montgomery County, I write to express our opposition to HB708 – Comprehensive Climate Solutions.

While we appreciate our legislature's commitment to addressing climate change and are equally committed to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, this bill goes too far, too fast. It is narrow, unrealistic, and will be costly for the state, our businesses, and our residents.

The total phase-out of energy sources such as propane, heating oil, and particularly natural gas for residential and commercial buildings by 2040 is simply unrealistic and unaffordable. Many of the small businesses that are the lifeblood of our community rely on natural gas to power their operations. Forcing them to stop using natural gas will add an unavoidable hardship to many that are still recovering from the pandemic. The cost to replace a natural gas fuel boiler to produce steam or hot water is more than three times the cost of the electric fired boiler. Likewise, the cost of converting a restaurant, for example, from gas to electric is likewise something many are not in a position to do at this point.

Further, we understand that Maryland's existing electric grid is already congested, that there is not nearly enough renewable energy available or that building out the electric infrastructure required by these bills is impossible within the timeframe dictated by the bill. Some experts tell us that it would take at least ten years to design, permit, and construct just 30% of the estimated system requirements, at a cost of billions, significantly increasing energy costs for all business- and home-owners - particularly those who can least afford it.

Real solutions for meeting Maryland's emission reduction goals can and must be accomplished without threatening our businesses well-being, economic recovery, energy reliability, and energy affordability. Businesses and consumers need incentives – carrots, not sticks – to get on board for a more sustainable future. This bill wields a stick approach that will be used even earlier than originally planned, and it will create new burdens for both business- and home-owners.

We hope we can count on you to recognize the concerns of all of your constituents - including business owners - and oppose this legislation.

For these reasons, the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **UNFAVORABLE report on HB708.**

Jane Redicker

President & CEO

Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce

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