



RMI Written Testimony in Support of Provisions in HB 708

House Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 231
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401
Attn: Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby

Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amar Shah. I'm a Manager at RMI, a non-partisan, non-profit focused on a just, prosperous, and zero-carbon energy transition.

I am testifying today in support of provisions in HB 708, specifically those that initiate climate-aligned utility planning and that transition the state's energy efficiency program away from subsidies for new fossil fuel equipment.

First, long-term PSC and utility planning would ensure a more equitable and prosperous transition for Maryland. The state's own Building Energy Transition Plan points to change in next two decades – a shift toward efficient, electric heating and a 60-95% reduction in gas use in buildings. Through proactive planning, Maryland can adopt policies and investments on the gas and electric side to reduce costs for ratepayers, protect low-income households, and preserve high quality jobs. This includes exploring non-pipe alternatives like efficiency, electrification, and demand flexibility to limit risky new gas infrastructure investments (potential stranded assets), enabling pilot programs, and more. Maryland is not alone – state governments across the country have recognized the value in early planning – ten jurisdictions, including New York, Minnesota, and Nevada, have initiated such processes.

Second, we support the transition of state's EmPOWER energy efficiency program away from subsidies for new fossil fuel equipment. Directing investments for low-income households to home weatherization, beneficial electrification, and required pre-weatherization repairs can achieve the key goals of the program – reducing gas demand, lowering bills, and improving health and comfort – without locking households into 15+ years of continued gas use. As wealthier residents begin to electrify, low-income households are at risk of being left with increasing gas infrastructure costs and being subjected to skyrocketing bills if left reliant on expensive decarbonized gases.

Lastly, we note that the State's Building Energy Transition Plan does not simply offer climate benefits, but also significant public health benefits. An increasing body of research has found that indoor and outdoor air quality suffers due to emissions from gas, heating oil, and propane combustion in buildings, putting vulnerable populations at risk and increasing air quality-related premature mortality.

Maryland has done important work over the last year to review the most promising economic, technical, and equity pathways to achieving its climate goals in the decades. HB 708 provides reasonable and appropriate first steps to advance this work in the years to come.



Thank you for your time today.

Amar Shah

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