

February 23, 2022

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB381 – Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Commercial and Residential Buildings

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon Delegate Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

My name is Meghana Kotraiah and I am a sophomore dual degree student at the University of Maryland. I am the Speaker of the Legislature for the Student Government Association, and am heavily involved in student leadership for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. I am a born and raised Marylander, growing up in Montgomery County; living in Germantown and Gaithersburg, and now living in College Park.

Having spent all my life here, I know how deeply Marylanders care for the environment and the communities around them. My parents are the perfect example of this. A few years ago, my family was able to sign a lease on solar panels for the roof of our single-family residential home, and my mom bought a new car - electric. We installed an EV charger and environmentally friendly water and space heating. We did this because of the care and regard my parents have for the environment, but we were able to do it because of the privilege we had to do so.

HB831 would manifest Marylanders' concern and regard for the environment and our communities into law, as it contains essential aspects of environmental protection, including building emission standards and new construction regulations. This bill includes building emission standards for commercial and multifamily buildings, which are responsible for roughly 30% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Because of efficiency standards and building codes, energy intensity and use has decreased since peaking in 2005. However, due to rapid population growth and commercial development, the current standards for environmental protection are not enough. We need stronger goals for our new buildings, to ensure that they are not contributing to these greenhouse gas emissions.

My parents chose to take individual action for our environment, and we all have that choice. As students in SGA, we make that choice by being here today giving testimony, the rallies we plan, and action we take. My student government has been excellent in pursuing climate action, and I would like to see the MGA make that same choice. With HB831, not only can we all choose to prioritize the environment and the communities that we call home, but we can push other entities towards making the same crucial choices. I strongly support HB831, and its requirements for all-electric new building standards, net-zero requirement for large buildings, alternative compliance fees, and decarbonization plans. I urge a favorable vote on this bill, hoping that you all make your own individual choices towards environmental protection. This is our responsibility.

Sincerely,

Meghana Kotraiah | University of Maryland - College Park | meghana.kot55@gmail.com