

**House Environment and Transportation Committee**

To: Delegate Barve, Chair; Delegate Stein, Vice-Chair; and Members of the Committee.

From: Jason Ascher, Political Director, Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association – United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters

OPPOSE HB 831 – Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions – Commercial and Residential Buildings

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association, our five United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Locals, and our over 10,000 members plus their families across all corners of Maryland, I ask you to **OPPOSE HB 831**.

As we move to renewable energy sources and eliminate fossil fuels, the state needs to keep track of three essential things. Protecting the workers, protecting the stability of the electric grid, and protecting taxpayers from high transition costs. As an organization, we are not against renewable energy. However, we believe workers, better known as taxpayers, need to be the priority in this process. We will never support the wholesale elimination of natural gas from the energy sector, especially while renewable energy infrastructure cannot replace it.

Hard-working Marylanders build and maintain the infrastructure needed to operate our electric grid. These workers earn good family-sustaining wages with benefits so they can take care of their families, spend money in the community to help support local businesses, and pay taxes. Eliminating fossil fuel infrastructure would cost many hard-working Marylanders their jobs and ability to do these things. The jobs created to replace them in the renewable energy sector are typically lower-paying than those they will lose and do not include the same benefits. This legislation says nothing about the workers who build these buildings that will lose jobs.

Everyone wants to be able to use their cell phones and computers. They also enjoy watching TV and Movies. To continue to do these things, you need a safe and constant flow of electricity. Removing fossil fuels from buildings before enough renewable infrastructure is built to replace them could cause significant issues and lead to people not having the ability to use their phones, computers, and televisions. We need to make sure that these buildings have enough power that the residents can use all their electric devices without worry.

Finally, if you require taxpayers to replace fossil fuel operating HVAC, water heaters, etc., there is a cost that many would not be able to afford. There would also be a need for these taxpayers to upgrade the electrical wiring. Studies have shown that these upgrades could cost as much as \$30,000 to \$40,000 per home. These upgrades are an expense that many working-class taxpayers cannot afford. For renters, this is also true because landlords would pass on the cost to their tenants to make these upgrades. The language on use for “no upfront costs” for these upgrades does not prevent homeowners and renters from paying for the exorbitant cost of these upgrades.

For these reasons, I ask you to **OPPOSE HB 831**

Sincerely,

Jason Ascher
Political Director
Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association