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Testimony on HB 831 –
**HB 831: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Commercial and Residential
Buildings**
Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA) supports HB 831.

Maryland faith communities have long been taking action to green our houses of worship as a way to care for our climate and our neighbors, and we call on our elected officials to help in our efforts to start **turning away from burning**—moving from burning gas and other fossil fuels in our buildings to clean and affordable electric heat pumps. With fully 40% of our state’s climate pollution coming from our buildings, we know that there is a direct line between the gas, oil, and propane burned to heat our buildings and our water, and the extreme weather, flooding, and sea-level rise that is becoming all-too-common in Maryland.

In the past year, many congregations have been learning more about the danger that burning gas poses to our health and our climate. The **Sikh Spiritual Center in Rockville** is one of many congregations across our region that have participated in a gas leak tagging event. Using a handheld methane leak detector, they **were able to find a number of leaks in the gas network right outside their house of worship.**



At left, children from Tifereth Israel Congregation monitor gas leaks near Silver Spring. At right, members of the Sikh Spiritual Center in Rockville prepare to head out for their own leak tagging expedition.

Sadly, this is not surprising. Comprehensive leak monitoring in Washington, DC, both by the [District government](#) and [volunteers](#), as well as leak monitoring other places across the country, has shown that **the gas networks beneath our streets, bringing gas to our furnaces and water heaters, leak constantly.** Our leaky gas networks are a climate catastrophe, releasing methane gas with 80 times the warming power of CO2 directly into the atmosphere.

A [recent report](#) from Stanford University shows that **those leaks don't stop when gas pipes enter our homes.** Our gas appliances are constantly releasing low-level methane leaks, with about 80% of leaks coming when appliances are turned off. That's on top of the dangerous indoor air pollution gas appliances produce when they're turned on, harming our lungs and endangering our most vulnerable neighbors.

Across Maryland, faith communities are starting the work of turning away from burning, choosing healthy and clean electric appliances over gas, oil, and propane. **We call on you to pass HB 831 and its essential climate-friendly buildings provisions.**



In January, over 100 people of faith from across Maryland gathered on zoom to learn about the harm caused by burning gas and show support for clean building legislation in Maryland.



Members of the Jewish Climate Action Network DMV celebrate Tu BiShvat, the new year of the trees, with a call to turn away from burning gas.