



**Committee:** Finance Committee

**Testimony on:** SB524 - Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency & Conservation

Programs–Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing

**Organization:** MLC Climate Justice Wing

**Person**

**Submitting:** Diana Younts, co-chair

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 15, 2022

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB524. MLC's Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and grasstops organizations focused on climate justice.

Energy efficiency is a proven, cost-effective way to both lower the cost of energy and reduce carbon emissions. Since 2008, when the EmPOWER program was first enacted with a goal of reducing electricity usage by 15 percent by 2015, Maryland has benefited from a performance-target-driven energy efficiency portfolio.

Low-Income households have been left behind in this transition to greater energy efficiency because they tend to live in older homes that need health and safety remediation such as lead and mold removal before their homes can be weatherized.

As a result, because energy is a regressive cost, low-income households in Maryland dedicate 13% of their annual incomes to energy costs and pay 550% more as a percent of income than non low-income households. The majority of these (55%) are Black, Hispanic, or Asian households. Because of these and other barriers it is more difficult for low-income households to benefit from the EmPOWER program, as compared to high-income households.

The legislature now has an opportunity to fix this, by codifying a complementary performance driven goal for low-income housing. This new, common sense, ramp up to a 1% energy savings goal will allow Maryland to retrofit the 450,000 eligible low-income residents at least 100 years sooner than the 130 years projected under the current program.

Lessons learned from the rest of the portfolio, and from energy efficiency resource standards such as EmPOWER Maryland generally, show that they benefit from specific performance targets. Electric utilities under Maryland's portfolio are performance-driven, thanks to the initial 15% by 2015 target and the current 2% target. Neither are there performance goals for low-income households under programs administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. Now is the time to rectify that.

Energy efficiency has already saved Maryland consumers billions of dollars, reduced air pollution and created new economic activity including good jobs. A performance goal for low-income programs is overdue.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for SB524.

**MLC Climate Justice Wing:**

Assateague Coastal Trust  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
WISE  
Frack Free Frostburg  
Mountain Maryland Movement  
Clean Water Action  
Howard County Indivisible  
Howard County Sierra Club  
Columbia Association Climate change and sustainability advisory committee  
HoCo Climate Action  
CHEER  
Climate XChange - Maryland  
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/  
National Parks Conservation Association  
350 Montgomery County  
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization  
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County  
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee  
Audubon Naturalist Society  
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Environmental Justice Ministry  
Coalition For Smarter Growth  
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County  
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign  
MoCo DCC  
Potomac Conservancy  
Casa de Maryland  
Nuclear Information & Resource Service  
Clean Air Prince Georges  
Laurel Resist  
Greenbelt Climate Action Network  
Maryland League of Conservation Voters  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative  
Ministry of Maryland  
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial Cafos  
Wicomico NAACP  
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Chispa MD  
Climate Law & Policy Project  
Maryland Poor Peoples Campaign  
Labor for Sustainability  
The Nature Conservancy  
Clean Air Prince Georges  
350 Baltimore  
Maryland Environmental Health Network  
Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis  
Talbot Rising

Adat Shalom Climate Action

Mid-Atlantic Earth Holders

Climate Parents of Prince Georges

Echotopia

Maryland NAACP State Conference,

Environmental Justice Committee