



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0296

Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

FAVORABLE

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair, Senator Cheryl Kagan and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., Co-Director, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

DATE: February 14, 2023

The Episcopal Church supports all initiatives that follow the Biblical call to become Beloved Community, which includes taking action to ensure that all of God's children have good, safe, and dignified places to live and thrive. Along with healthcare and education, we believe that safe, livable and affordable housing is a human right. We also realize that to meet its ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gases, that Maryland will need to repair hundreds of thousands of homes occupied by low and middle-income people in order to meet its climate goals – we believe a healthy environment is also a human right. When Maryland passed the Climate Solutions Now Act last year, it set a goal of a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2031. The reduction is to be accomplished in part by moving homes from fossil fuels to electricity.

The report from a group of environmental organizations stated Maryland will not be able to meet those goals without prioritizing repairs and upgrades to the state's 450,000 low-income homes. The study recommended the state take advantage of federal grants from the recent Inflation Reduction Act and infrastructure bill. This bill will establish the means by which low and middle income home-owners – and landlords - will be able to afford necessary repairs to their dwellings which otherwise would have likely been beyond their ability to afford. Those repairs will enable residents to qualify for energy efficiency improvements. And, in the long run, those improvements will save the state money by reducing the amount of energy bill assistance needed. Everyone wins.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report