



Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)

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Jonathan Lacock-Nisly, Director of Faithful Advocacy

February 27, 2023

Testimony on SB 689 –

SB 689: Energy Savings Act

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA) and the below Maryland faith groups and communities support SB 689.

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. As we've learned more about the impact burning methane gas and other fossil fuels in our buildings has on our health, our climate, and our neighbors who can least afford ever-increasing gas bills, we have started the work of turning away from burning—moving from burning fossil fuels in our buildings to instead choosing clean and affordable electric heat pumps, induction stoves, and heat pump water heaters. We call on our elected officials to join in this effort by **passing the Energy Savings Act and strengthening the EmPOWER Maryland program for all that has breath.**

Dozens of faith communities across our region have documented the climate impacts of our leaky gas network and gas appliances. Using handheld methane leak detectors, faith communities have found hundreds of gas pipes leaking methane gas—a climate super-polluter—in the neighborhoods around their houses of worship.

Others have seen the health impacts of their gas stoves in real time. Individuals in our congregations have tested for nitrogen dioxide, one of the pollutants produced by gas stoves. They have found that their gas stoves are often polluting at 200-300% of EPA recommended limits. These dangerous levels of indoor air pollution are why some public health experts have compared having a gas stove to running an idling car in your house, and why [studies have shown](#) that children growing up in a home with a gas stove are 42% more likely to develop asthma symptoms.

For the health of our Common Home, we can strengthen the EmPOWER Maryland program and align it with our climate goals. For all that has breath, we can provide subsidies to help Marylanders choose cleaner, all-electric appliances that protect the lungs of our children and most vulnerable neighbors. And for Marylanders already struggling with high utility bills, we can ensure that they have access to all the federal and state funding available to help them lower their utility bills and choose more affordable electric appliances.

We can do all of these things by passing the Energy Savings Act.

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 join us by strengthening the EmPOWER Maryland program and passing SB 689 for all that has breath.**



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Submitted on behalf of **Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)**, and these Maryland faith groups and communities:

**Central Maryland Ecumenical Council
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions**

Cedar Lane Environmental Justice Ministry

Unitarian Universalists believe in justice and respect for all beings. We believe that all existence is interconnected and that we have a responsibility to protect both our fellow humans and all other inhabitants of that interconnected web. Clearly methane harms. It damages human health through pollution, explosions, and fires. It increases global heating thus harming the environment and damaging the biosphere and the other inhabitants with which we share the web. Further the costs of natural gas which is methane are expected to rise and the easy availability of gas will decrease. This will increase utility bills and the poorest among us will, as always, be the ones who pay the price of this situation. It is our responsibility to protect our residents, especially our low income residents from both the dangers of methane and the rising costs of natural gas. We therefore request a favorable vote on this bill from the committee.

**Creation Care Advocacy and Action Team
of the Baltimore Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church**

As people of faith, we are committed to loving our neighbors. The Energy Savings Act supports love of neighbor by helping to reduce greenhouse gasses, to reduce indoor air pollution, and, with the supporting bill, to make sure that low-income households are included in the benefits.

Creation Care Ministry of the Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and specifically the Delaware-Maryland Synod support divesting of fossil fuels and understand the importance of this in mitigating our planet's climate crisis.

Episcopal Diocese of Washington, Creation Care Task Force

The Energy Savings Act is consistent with our Task Force's mission to reduce the negative impacts of climate change and to support climate and environmental justice.

Green Muslims

Jewish Climate Action Network DMV

National Capital Presbytery Earth Care Network



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We commend to your attention **additional supportive testimony** submitted by:

Action in Montgomery (AIM)

Ecumenical Leaders Group (senior leaders of Christian faith communities in Maryland – Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ)

Justice & Witness Action Network Md (Central Atlantic Conference, UCC)

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Homes

The provisions of the Energy Savings Act build on the success of the EmPOWER program in ways that are consistent with the broad moral vision of Pope Francis in his encyclical letter Laudato Si', including his call in that letter for "removing from the market products which are less energy efficient or more polluting...and encouraging the construction and repair of buildings aimed at reducing their energy consumption and levels of pollution." The bill's provisions also expand access for low-income households to state and federal funds for energy efficiency and whole-home retrofits, also consistent with Pope Francis's vision. The Energy Savings Act, then, will make a positive difference for low-income Marylanders, while also making a positive difference for the environment.

Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Clergy and green leaders from across Maryland submitted photos in support of the Energy Savings Act with a simple message:

For all that has breath, strengthen EmPOWER



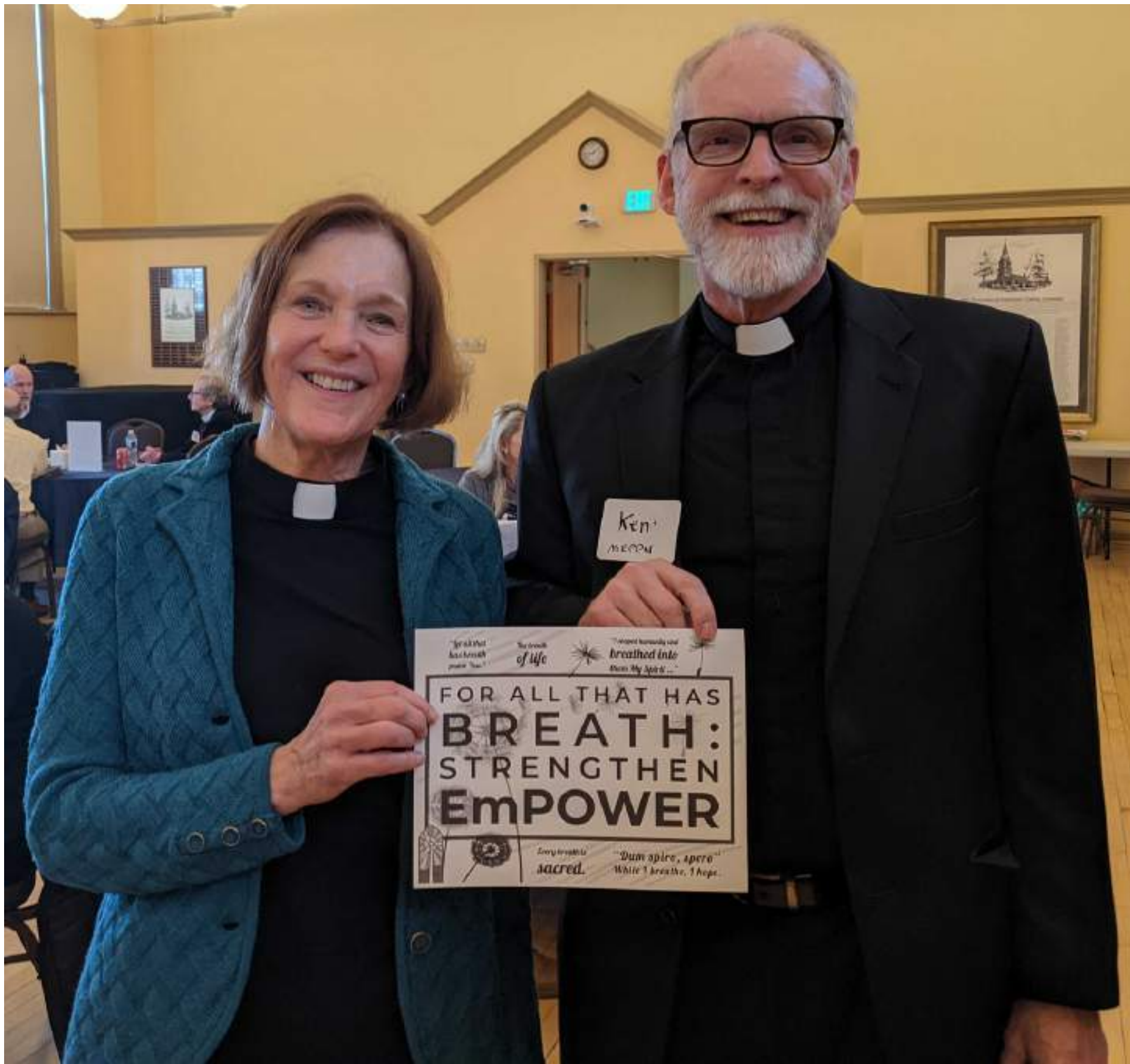
Catholics for Our Common Home gather in Annapolis to speak out in support of the Energy Savings Act



Rev. Margaret Brack, Co-Lead of GreenGrace and the Priest-in-Charge at St. Thomas Episcopal Parish Church and Jonathan Lacock-Nisly



Rev. Dell Hinton, Bishop Bill Gohl, Del-MD Synod ELCA Bishop Eugene Taylor Sutton, Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, Bishop Denis Madden, Archdiocese of Baltimore, General Presbyter Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Taylor, and Presbytery of Baltimore Gary Gillespie of the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council



Rev. Linda Boyd and Rev. Ken Phelps



Rev. Aubra Love



Rev. Lauren Bloom, Priest in Charge at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in the Eastport; The Rt. Rev Eugene Taylor Sutton, Episcopal Bishop of Maryland; Jonathan Lacock-Nisly; Rev. Margaret Brack, Co-Lead of GreenGrace and the Priest-in-Charge at St. Thomas Episcopal Parish Church, Hancock, MD; and Glenn





Members of Maryland Presbyterian Church in Baltimore County

