



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support SB 689 - Energy Savings Act

To: Chair Feldman and the Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
From: Phil Webster, PhD
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **SB 689 - Energy Savings Act** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committees.

The UULM-MD is a statewide faith-based advocacy organization, with over 1,000 members, based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Two Principles are particularly relevant. The Second Principle, *justice, equity and compassion in human relations* and the Seventh Principle, *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*.

Unitarian Universalists believe in *justice and equity in human relations*. Maryland's low income families and individuals pay a greater percentage of their income for energy than more affluent families. To have an appreciable impact on greenhouse gas emissions, ALL Marylanders must participate.

This Bill will help by bringing the benefits of the EmPOWER program to everyone by:

- Expanding access for low-income households to state and federal funds for energy efficiency and whole-home retrofits including lead removal, mold remediation, asbestos removal, and building improvements by establishing a multilingual community outreach specialist program.
- Reaching more Marylanders by expanding the network of contractors eligible to participate in improvements through the EmPOWER program. And providing ongoing education, outreach, training and certification for contractors to deliver services and ensure Marylanders see the most benefits.
- Ensuring that landlords do not increase rents in homes that benefit from the EmPOWER program.

Unitarian Universalists also believe that we should all have *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. The Climate Solutions Act of 2022 set ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gasses in Maryland. However, the EmPOWER program, as currently operating, is incentivizing INCREASED usage of methane gas.

This needs to stop.

The Energy Savings Act:

- Stops incentives for fossil fuel appliances and heating, maximizes federal efficiency incentives, and creates new incentives for electrification, efficient electric appliances, and home heating.
- Sets clear performance targets, climate benchmarks, incentives and penalties for utilities to ensure the program is reducing Maryland's overall energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Builds on the successful EmPOWER rebates and resources for energy audits and weatherization.

The Energy Savings Act delivers the majority of savings directly to Maryland households to help lower utility bills by ensuring 85% of energy savings happen in the home, where ratepayers benefit most.

This bill is good for all our citizens and for the climate! Marylanders need bold and urgent action! Please keep us on the right and moral path towards a livable climate and a sustainable world. We owe it to our children.

We support this bill and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.

Phil Webster, PhD

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