

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee,

I am Ron Weiss of Fort Washington asking for your favorable report on HB 1367.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you why I support HB 1367.

In my view the risk of putting a lithium-ion battery storage system in a residential zone is like the risk of Tesla full self-driving. Both usually work as intended. Usually.

When they fail, the results can be tragic.

While the vast majority of battery energy storage is currently lithium-ion based, battery storage is still an emerging technology. There are new battery technologies that are much safer, but they have not yet made a dent in the market.

States like New York State are taking the risk of lithium-ion battery storage seriously and have an inter-agency working group that has issued fire code recommendations. They note that:

“Only a few years ago, codes and standards governing lithium-ion BESS safety were in their adolescent stage and contained only limited requirements for these systems. In July 2019, following several BESS failures across the globe, New York State was the first state to adopt language from the draft 2021 International Fire Code (IFC) Section 1207 Electrical Energy Storage Systems, which provided more detailed regulations for lithium-ion batteries than the previous editions of the Fire Code.”

The New York State working group is making recommendations to improve their 2021 draft fire code for BESS safety, while Maryland has a fire code tied to the 2018 edition of NFPA 1.

That pre-lithium-ion battery code is what our local jurisdictions use to permit lithium-ion battery storage systems.

Clean Energy Associates published their summary of BESS quality risks this month and found that of 320 factory inspections, 26% of inspected energy storage systems had quality issues related to the fire detection and suppression system. They also found 18% of the inspected systems had quality issues related to the thermal management system.

I'd rather have an MD 210 highway full of Tesla full self-driving cars than live next to a BESS that may have safety-related quality issues but was permitted by a code that does not know about lithium-ion batteries. At least I have alternative routes to Indian Head Highway. I'd have to relocate my family to escape a lithium-ion BESS.

BESS projects fall into a regulatory crack that HB 1367 fills by evaluating and vetting energy storage projects before locating them in residential zones.

Please keep our communities safe by voting favorably on HB 1367.

Thank you.

Ron Weiss, Fort Washington