



27 February, 2024

The Honorable C. T. Wilson
Chair of the Economic Matters Committee
Room 231 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB0864
Public Utilities – Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans

Dear Chairman Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing to voice AIA Maryland's support of House Bill 0864, the Energy Savings Act. Our nearly 2,000 architect members work every day to consider the health, safety and welfare of the occupants in buildings we design. While the properties impacted by this legislation will most likely not be touched by an architect, we feel that it is important to advocate for the low to moderate income households who may have the most to lose in making utility and appliance choices for their homes.

This bill provides the opportunity and incentives to enable them to lower their energy burden and move toward healthier appliances in their homes. Weatherization and electrification of low to moderate income households are important step toward allowing all of us to reduce our carbon output, but the economic and health benefits of the targeted recipients are critical.

The energy audits of the EmPOWER program are a critical first step. This legislation supports a whole home approach, aiming to address health and safety upgrades, weatherization, energy efficiency and general maintenance. One of the most efficient ways of reducing energy use is addressing "passive" ways to reduce the need for heating and cooling and the building weatherization focus of this program offers just that. An inefficient building envelope can act the same as an open door, sending heating and cooling energy into the atmosphere if a residence does not have an efficient air barrier to temper the outdoor climate and if the insulation levels are limited, heating and cooling a home is incredibly inefficient. The energy audit helps to identify passive demand reduction strategies to implement in residents' homes and operating money saved from implementing those strategies, is reducing passive energy demand and generating direct savings for the resident every month the resident heats or cools their residence. Adding active demand strategies like programmable thermostats, creates further opportunities to increase "behind the meter" savings for participants in the empower program.

The energy audits of this program include the evaluation to assess the readiness of a home for electrification and it will promote rebates that can be used to support fuel switching from gas to electric. Making this switch is an important means to shield these residents from the anticipated rapid rise in fossil fuel costs and it will enable them to use building systems and appliances that are more fuel efficient and allow for a healthier household environment. A study by Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships found that in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic areas the installation of an electric air-source heat pump can yield annual energy savings that may range from \$300 to nearly \$1,000.

The technology of the air source heat pumps has advanced to enable them to work effectively down to -10 degrees, and Maryland has never in our recorded weather history had temperatures that have dropped below -7. The coldest winter day on average in central Maryland is approximately 6 degrees, which is very comfortably within the range of air source heat pumps. Additionally, the technology of the electric appliances in the homes, eliminates the chance for carbon monoxide or nitrogen oxide pollution.

AIA Maryland encourages you to support this legislation, both to create healthier and more affordable living conditions for low to moderate income residents and to help us statewide, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions toward our goal of zero carbon emissions by 2045. We ask your committee to vote in favor of HB 0864.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Parts', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland

cc: Economic Matters Committee
AIA Maryland Board of Directors