



HB864

**Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans
Testimony before House Economic Matters Committee
February 29, 2024
Position: Favorable**

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the committee, my name is Peter Alexander and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of HB864**. We appreciate the leadership of Vice-Chair Crosby and Delegate Qi for sponsoring this important legislation.

By enacting the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act in 2008, the MGA took a big step forward toward reducing green house gas emissions (GHG) while saving money for Maryland residents and utility ratepayers. Since then, this law has been highly successful, creating nearly \$13 Billion in energy cost savings and reducing GHG emissions nearly 10 million metric tons of CO2 equivalents. Efficiency improvements from low-cost energy audits and weatherization, and discounted energy-efficient appliances actually decreased electricity usage in the state.

As good as it has been, EmPOWER is not enough to meet Maryland's 2031 GHG reduction targets. More efficiency improvements and more fossil fuel combustion reduction needs to be implemented. Since buildings are the second largest emitters of GHGs, converting homes and commercial buildings to clean renewable energy sources is imperative. Heat pumps avoid GHG emissions from gas and oil furnaces and are 3-fold more efficient than gas heat. Transitioning Maryland households from gas to electric space heating and appliances is essential for achieving our state's legislatively-enacted climate goals.

HB864 will set pollution reduction targets and measure the effectiveness of its implementation. It will expand access to state and federal energy efficiency programs for low-income households while improving resident's health by decreasing indoor air pollution from gas furnaces and appliances. HB864 will also increase gas utility transparency and accountability for infrastructure planning, service costs, and corporate profits and end ratepayer subsidies for GHG emitting home heating and other GHG emitting appliances.

Let's take another big step forward in climate and health stewardship by making these commonsense improvements to the EmPOWER program.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

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