

Testimony Supporting HB 864
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 21st, 2024

Position: Favorable



Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa), along with five regional multi-faith networks and over a dozen Maryland faith organizations, request a favorable report on HB 864, the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act.

Our breath connects us to each other and to all life. We believe our breath is for singing praise — not for breathing soot and pollution.

But in Maryland, burning methane gas is harming all that has breath:

Below ground, the pipes that bring gas to our homes leak methane, sometimes enough to risk an explosion — and trap more than 80 times as much heat as carbon dioxide, further damaging our climate.

Above ground, in our homes, burning gas indoors hurts the lungs and health of our loved ones, particularly the young and old.

Today, we are using our breath to speak out: for a safer, cleaner, and more efficient future where everything is powered by clean energy. We call on our elected leaders to issue a favorable report on HB 864, the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act, to help Marylanders get off gas-burning appliances at home.

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, efficient 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 efficient appliances.

Across Maryland, our faith communities are choosing healthy and efficient electric appliances over gas, oil, and propane. We call on you to join us by strengthening the EmPOWER Maryland program and passing HB 864 – *for all that has breath.*

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

Action In Montgomery (AIM)

Anne Arundel Connecting Together (ACT)

Central Maryland Ecumenical Council (CMEC)

Multi-Faith Alliance of Climate Stewards of Frederick County (submitting additional testimony)

The EmPOWER Act will help Marylanders reduce their carbon dioxide and methane output through cost-saving incentives resulting in cleaner air for breathing and less heat trapping carbon gasses in the atmosphere. And it gives the most incentives to lower income households, which is important to faith groups who support creation justice.

People Acting Together in Howard (PATH)

Baltimore Jewish Council

Beloved DMV Environmental Justice Collective (Green leaders in Black churches)

Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church Creation Care

BWCUMC Creation Care supports HB 864 for its energy efficiency and electrification provisions to help eliminate health and environmental harms, especially for underserved and overburdened communities.

Chesapeake Earth Holders Community of Engaged Buddhism

Our community cares deeply for the wellbeing of the Earth and all living beings. We support the Energy Efficiency Act because it will provide a means by which the citizens of Maryland can, through their combined efforts to shift to cleaner forms of energy, help create a cleaner and healthier environment for all.

**Creation Care Ministry of the Delaware-Maryland Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**

Episcopal Diocese of Washington Creation Care Committee

Green Dharma DMV (Green leaders in Hindu and Jain communities)

Green Muslims

Jewish Climate Action Network DMV (JCAN-DMV)

Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County (submitting additional testimony)

Justice & Witness Action Network – Maryland
(Central Atlantic Conference, United Church of Christ)

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home (submitting additional testimony)

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (submitting additional testimony)

Over five hundred caring Marylanders have spoken out in their congregations to strengthen EmPOWER over the last two years. A dozen of them are below, and view the [full album here](#).

