

February 29, 2024

Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 0570, Working for Accessible Renewable Maryland Thermal Heat (WARMTH) Act

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

Good afternoon Chair Feldman and committee members, for the record, my name is Jamal Lewis, and I am a Director of Implementation Learning and Integration for Rewiring America, the leading electrification nonprofit working to help families and communities achieve energy efficiency, improve health, and save money while tackling nationwide emission goals. I'm also writing to you today as a member of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change's (MCCC) Mitigation Working Group (MWG). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Today, we urge a favorable report on SB 0570, which would promote better buildings in Maryland.

Thanks to the efforts of the General Assembly, we have a nation-leading requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2031 and net-zero by 2045. According to Maryland's Climate Pathway Report, electrification is essential to achieving these climate goals and the path includes a zero-emission appliance standard that would cover space and water heating, zero-emissions construction standard covering all new residential and commercial buildings, and strengthened energy efficiency standards. This translates to the rapid electrification of both the residential and commercial building sectors so that by 2045 electricity accounts for 83% and 94% of the energy consumption in residential and commercial buildings, respectively.

The good news is that there are currently clean, electric versions of these machines available on the market today. When it comes to heating and cooling, heat pumps are the gold standard. Heat pumps are 2-4x more efficient than gas furnaces and do not emit health-harming pollutants. In particular, geothermal heat pumps, especially when connected to a networked system, are the most efficient, produce the least amount of GHG emissions, generate the most energy savings, and reduce energy usage and peak demand the most. Though the benefits are immense, these technologies can be more difficult to access given the high upfront costs. Still, these technologies are well worth the investment. Residential energy use can be cut in half, investments in expensive energy generation can be prevented by minimizing peak demands, and energy bill savings can be maximized due to efficiency, lower utility investments, and peak demand costs.

As we push to electrify everything in Maryland, it is critical that we are maximizing GHG emissions reduction while also minimizing energy bills, especially for low-and-moderate income households in the state. The right mix of geothermal heat pumps connected to networked

systems can enable these benefits. In passing SB 0570, this body recognizes that reality and would be taking necessary action. We urge a favorable report on SB 0570 and help Maryland communities move closer to a more resilient, healthier, and cleaner future. I am available for any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamal" and last name "Lewis" clearly distinguishable.

Jamal Lewis
Director of Implementation Learning & Integration
Rewiring America