

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

TO: Marc Korman, Chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

FROM: Mariana Rosales, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Climate; Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, State Policy Manager.

POSITION: Oppose HB 1240 Fossil Fuel-Powered Appliances and Vehicles - Installation, Use, and Fees.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) opposes HB 1240 offered by Delegate Rose. HB 1240 seeks to keep Maryland in a business-as-usual fossil fuel economy, making it impossible to forbid using or installing natural gas– and propane–powered appliances, and also prohibiting the Motor Vehicle Administration from charging or collecting fees for the title of gasoline–powered appliances and vehicles.

HB 1240 would be detrimental to Maryland’s commitments to address climate change. The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 set a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% from 2006 levels by 2031 and achieving net-zero statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. To achieve this, we need to change our current paths of consumption.

The largest sources of emissions in our state come from buildings, transportation, and energy. Three sectors that need urgent change. The administration needs tools to promote this change. There are new, cost-effective technologies and products on the market that would render a cleaner and Maryland for all; transitioning to these not only brings us closer to

Appliances powered by fossil fuels significantly contribute to indoor air pollution. Burning natural gas can cause or worsen respiratory illnesses, such as asthma. Nitrogen dioxide exposure from burning fossil fuels is a particular danger for children and can increase the odds of children developing respiratory illnesses by twenty percent. Long-term exposure to nitrogen dioxide has been linked to chronic lung disease and increased mortality. Unburned natural gas can also leak from appliances, and this contains benzene, which is known to be a carcinogen. Gas-powered vehicles also emit harmful air pollutants, like particulate matter, that are detrimental to pulmonary and cardiovascular health, and nitrogen dioxide.

HB 1240 would deprive the administration of valuable tools to implement our climate vision. Transitioning to a net-zero economy in our state should be intentional, practical, and methodical. We should also be prioritizing Marylanders’ health and well-being.

Maryland is experiencing more frequent extreme weather events with increasing intensity, including heavy rainfall, high tides, and record heat, causing significant damage to infrastructure, homes, and natural habitats. Our existing cities, towns, rural communities, and supporting critical infrastructure are not equipped to handle the increased stress imposed by rapidly worsening impacts of climate change. We need to act quickly, and HB 1240 would make the transition to a net-zero economy even more challenging.

Therefore, we urge an unfavorable report on HB 1240.