



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB864
Public Utilities - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans
Senaten - EEE

Jose Coronado-Flores , On Behalf of CASA

March 21st, 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in support of HB864 -Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans**). CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 120,000 Black and Latino immigrants and working families. We want to thank Vice Chair Crosby for his leadership on the bill.

HB864 is important legislation that will address energy efficiency in low-income households and multifamily residential buildings. In particular, we are invested in seeing this bill pass, because CASA members are overwhelmingly renters in multifamily buildings that suffer from lack of weatherization and energy cost burden.

When it comes to weatherization and advancing energy efficiency, low-income renters can be left out of the process or feel as if that cannot do anything, because they don't own their own homes. As aggressive rent increases and gentrification loom, these same renters also fear the outcomes of costly improvements to their apartment communities. However, this bill acknowledges the fear that renovations and improvements will price them out. On pages 10 and 11 of the bill, there is explicit language that addresses displacement and rent increases after weatherization is conducted in affordable housing.

Not only does this bill address the energy burden in residential buildings, but it also tangentially addresses housing conditions. Many of our members live in apartments where weatherization has not been done in decades - this is not an exaggeration. If we can get more buildings weatherized with greater incentives for property owners, we will improve housing conditions. Tenants are entitled to warm homes in the winter and cool homes in the summer; they are also entitled to homes that are sealed from the elements to prevent mold growth and other condition issues.

With the benefits of improving housing conditions, offering low-income tenants a stake in greenhouse reductions, and lowering electric bills, HB864 is a worthy bill. CASA urges a favorable report.

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