

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-chair Kagan, and members of the Committee:

My name is Sergine Yango, and I have been a renter in Maryland for over 20 years. I ask you to pass HB1532 with amendments. Specifically, 1) amend the language on EmPOWER to increase it rather than to eliminate it for several years, 2) add mention of induction stoves and heat pumps, and 3) please keep the utility rate reform.

On EmPOWER. The opportunities that exist for tenants are far more limited than those available to homeowners. And when it comes to clean air and energy efficiency, renters are too often left behind. I have not been able to take advantage of EmPOWER but now I hear that it might be cut. With energy prices increasing, I am concerned that I will no longer be able to participate in the EmPOWER program.

On induction stoves and heat pumps. I live in one of the many older apartment buildings in Maryland where rent is relatively affordable, but where owners have not invested in renovations over the years. As a result, many of us live with aging gas-powered appliances, poor ventilation, mold, rodents, and rising utility bills.

Through the Maryland Just Power Alliance's community science project, I have personally tested over 100 apartments for nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide. In older apartments, most appliances are powered by methane gas. Ventilation is not standard, it is a luxury.

That means harmful gases get trapped inside our homes. And we know that about 12% of childhood asthma cases in the U.S. are linked to gas stove use. These are not just statistics. These are Maryland children.

On utility rate reform. Renters are struggling with utility bills even as the corporate utility companies like Pepco posted some of its highest profits in years. Ensuring they are paid for actual expenses rather than "predicted" or "forecasted" expenses will help keep costs down for families like mine. Also making sure they spend money first on repairing power lines before they build new power lines will also help costs down.

We are nurses. We are grocery store workers. We are teachers. We are working two or three jobs, living paycheck to paycheck, paying high utility bills—only to come home and breathe toxic air.

We deserve better.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,
Sergine Yango