

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Testimony on:** HB 870 – The Large Buildings for Tomorrow Act  
**Position:** Support  
**Hearing Date:** February 25, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports building electrification and energy efficiency as a key pathway to meeting the State’s climate goals and protecting the health of Marylanders and in turn urges a favorable report on HB 870.

HB 870 requires newly permitted commercial and residential buildings of over 35,000 square feet starting in 2028 to meet all energy standards for the year 2031 under Maryland’s Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS) (COMAR 26.28). This bill would create useful clarity for builders, ensuring that buildings built between 2028 and 2031 are built to the 2031 standards, and do not have to later be retrofitted to meet the standards. BEPS exempts historical, elementary and secondary school, manufacturing and agricultural buildings.

Fuel burned in buildings accounts for approximately 16% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Maryland<sup>1</sup>. The electricity used in buildings accounts for an additional contribution to GHG pollution; however, this will decline over time as Maryland’s electricity production becomes increasingly carbon-free. As Maryland works to achieve its climate goals to reduce GHG emissions by 60% (from 2006 levels) by 2031 and reach net-zero by 2045, BEPS have played a crucial role in approaching these goals, meaningfully shifting the state toward carbon-free buildings. HB870 will further strengthen the state’s building decarbonization efforts.

Maryland has already demonstrated support for reducing GHG emissions in the buildings sector through building electrification. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has implemented BEPS that require increasing electrification and energy efficiency in buildings over 35,000 square feet. As called for in the December 2023 Climate Pollution Reduction Plan and Governor Moore’s June 2024 Executive Order 1, MDE is developing Zero Emissions Heating Equipment Standards and Clean Heat Standards that will reduce emissions from residential and commercial buildings as space and water heating equipment is replaced at the end of its useful life<sup>2</sup>. The General Assembly now has the opportunity with HB 870 to further contribute to achieving Maryland’s climate goals.

Building electrification and energy efficiency of new large commercial and residential buildings, as mandated through HB 870, would have significant public health benefits. Currently

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<sup>1</sup> *Reducing Emissions from Buildings*. Maryland Energy Administration. Retrieved February 23, 2026. <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/Buildings.aspx#:~:text=Bu%E2%80%8BBuildings%20contribute%20up,t hese%20emissions%20as%20a%20priority>.

<sup>2</sup> Executive Order 01.01.2024.19: Leadership by State Government: Implementing Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan. [https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/52/EO%2001.01.2024.19%20Leadership%20by%20State%20Government-%20Implementing%20Maryland%27s%20Climate%20Pollution%20Reduction%20Plan\\_Accessible.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/52/EO%2001.01.2024.19%20Leadership%20by%20State%20Government-%20Implementing%20Maryland%27s%20Climate%20Pollution%20Reduction%20Plan_Accessible.pdf)



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approximately 36%<sup>3</sup> of BEPS-covered homes in Maryland burn gas or other fossil fuels for heating. Use of indoor gas appliances can increase levels of nitrous oxides, benzene, and particulates inside buildings through regular use or gas leaks, all of which generate health risk. Benzene is a known carcinogen. Inside our homes, gas appliances increase the likelihood that children will develop asthma; one study showed that children in homes with gas stoves have a 42% higher risk of asthma<sup>4</sup>.

Requiring large new commercial and residential buildings to meet the 2031 standards makes economic sense. In the absence of HB 870, some new buildings permitted between 2028 and 2031 would rely on inefficient and fossil fuel infrastructure. For Maryland to reach its statutorily-required climate goals, these buildings would, in all likelihood, then need to be retrofitted with new electric appliances before the fossil fuel burning appliances reach the end of their lives, at significant expense. HB 870 would set Maryland on a path that avoids these retrofit expenses. Research shows that new buildings can be constructed without burning fossil fuels at roughly the same or lower lifecycle cost (+0%-5%) as buildings that use fossil fuels. The Sierra Club Maryland enthusiastically urges approval of HB 870.

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<sup>3</sup>ResStock 2024.1 for Maryland, analysis by Sierra Club.

<sup>4</sup>Lin, W; Brunekreef, B; Ulkine, G. *Meta-analysis of the effects of indoor nitrogen dioxide and gas cooking on asthma and wheeze in children*. International Journal of Epidemiology, Volume 42, Issue 6, December 2013, Pages 1724–1737, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyt150>