

Chair Korman, Chair Barnes, and members of the Committees;

My name is Amber Merrell and I am a resident of Montgomery County. I am in favor of HB1040 to protect SEIF funding, set minimum spending levels, and create additional programs for replacing low-efficiency electric resistance heaters with high-efficiency heat pumps and polluting gas stoves with induction stoves for low to moderate income households.

The Strategic Energy Investment Fund, or SEIF, presents an opportunity to invest in healthy and affordable energy. I understand that this is a difficult budget year. But SEIF can and should do so much more than issue \$40 rebates and balance the budget. We need safeguards on SEIF to ensure climate monies for years to come.

My husband and I bought our first home last summer in Silver Spring. It is heated with gas, like many homes in our area. We knew from the start that we wanted to switch to electric, but have had to postpone due to the large upfront costs of converting and the fear and uncertainty around electric bills. I don't know how Maryland will reach our climate goals if even those of us privileged enough to own a home can't afford to leave gas behind. And Maryland renters don't have the choice to begin with, even if they can afford to make the switch. Very few property owners will convert to high-efficiency appliances unless there are financial incentives to do so.

And \$40 rebates do not help. \$40 does not even cover weekly groceries. \$40 makes absolutely zero difference to my and my neighbors' financial situations. Some of the purposes of SEIF, as stated on the MEA website, are to reduce energy bills, make energy more affordable, and address energy equity issues. So let's do that. Everyone I have spoken with about these rebates, whether homeowner or renter, would prefer SEIF money be spent on striving towards an equitable energy transition, where no Marylander is subject to exorbitant utility bills and unsafe and unhealthy living condition due to aging and inefficient electric and gas infrastructure. And the \$400 million of SEIF money being raided to balance the budget and issue \$40 rebates could help make that a reality. That money can help home owners and apartment buildings convert from gas to electric. That money can upgrade appliances and save households up to \$1500 a year on utility bills. That money can make an actual, tangible impact on the lives of your constituents.

SEIF is climate money and it has the power to be able to make a significant difference to families, communities, and our statewide goals. We literally cannot afford for money to be removed from SEIF. SEIF money can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. SEIF can bring

healthier air to Maryland homes. SEIF can bring down energy bills at a time when Marylanders are making the decision whether to keep the lights on or buy groceries.

I personally want every cent of SEIF to be spent as intended on energy efficiency, renewables, and decarbonization. But HB1040 is the best protection I have seen, so I will support it until additional protections and programs can be put in place. The members of the Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee asked some great questions at the MEA budget hearing on February 26, 2026. They asked why aren't we doing better and doing more in the energy efficiency and renewables landscape. SEIF is how we do more. SEIF is how we do better. It's a ready-made pot of money to do exactly what the committee members were asking.

And if guidance is needed on implementing new programs for heat pumps and induction stoves, please look to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) because they are already doing this work. You have an opportunity to help your constituents in their daily lives. Protect SEIF. Invest in energy savings and healthy Maryland communities. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amber Merrell  
Silver Spring, MD