

Dear Chair Koman, Chair Barnes, and members of the Committees:

My name is Sergine Yango, and I have been a renter in Maryland for over 20 years. I ask you to pass HB1040 to protect the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) for its intended purpose, including at least \$100 million for heat pumps and induction stoves.

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 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 what that leads to: asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Research shows children in homes with gas stoves face significantly higher asthma risks, and a recent national study estimates 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.

Where I live, we have a strong tenants' association. We organize. We advocate. We speak up. But even with collective power, getting landlords to replace gas-powered HVAC systems, gas water heaters, and gas stoves is extremely difficult.

Why? Because from their perspective, it does not add up financially. As renters, we cannot replace appliances. We cannot install heat pumps. We cannot upgrade ventilation systems. The only person who can make those changes is the landlord.

That is why the Maryland Energy Administration's Strategic Energy Investment Fund — the SEIF—is so important.

The SEIF is not taxpayer money. It was created to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support energy transformation. Let us use it strategically—just as its name says.

Using SEIF funds to promote induction stoves, heat pump water heaters, window heat pumps, would give landlords a reason to help renters breathe clean air.

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. We deserve the same opportunity as homeowners to live in energy-efficient, healthy homes. I ask you to imagine a Maryland where every child—whether their family rents or owns—has the opportunity to breathe clean air.

Delegates of this great state, Maryland, have always aimed to lead on climate. Here is your opportunity to lead on health equity as well.

Use the SEIF strategically. Invest in renters. Invest in working families. Invest in clean air. Do not leave low- and middle-income Marylanders behind. Show us that you stand with working class people.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,
Sergine Yango