

Committee: Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB0864 - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Plans
Organization: Climate Coalition Montgomery County
Submitting: Karl Held
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 29, 2024

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0864 (with the sponsor amendments). The Climate Coalition Montgomery County, a coalition of 20 organizations focused on climate and the environment, urges you to vote favorably on HB0864.

Montgomery County has rigorous greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals of 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035. The County has demonstrated its commitment to achieving these goals by passing building energy performance standards and a building decarbonization bill. HB0864 will help Montgomery County meet its ambitious GHG reduction and building decarbonization goals by strengthening the original EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act, passed in 2008.

Not only will HB0864 require the EmPOWER Program to continue to offer free or discounted energy audits, provide rebates for efficient heating and appliances, and help offset the cost of weatherization for homeowners, but it will shift the goals from energy savings to GHG emission reductions. Furthermore, the bill requires electric utilities to provide incentives for switching to clean, efficient electric appliances and home heating. These EmPOWER incentives can be combined with both federal Inflation Reduction Act incentives and additional incentives offered by Montgomery County through its [Electrify MC](#) pilot program. HB0864 also provides greater benefits to ratepayers by setting a benchmark of 85% of GHG reductions from efficiency measures inside the home (i.e., “behind the meter”). Finally, we strongly support the bill’s provisions to help low-income households access EmPOWER benefits by directing the Department of Housing and Community Development to dedicate multilingual community outreach specialists to promoting the program.

In summary, HB0864 will lower energy costs for homeowners and businesses, leverage state incentives with federal and county funds for energy efficient appliances, reduce GHG emissions, and make homes healthier with reduced indoor air pollution.

For these reasons, we strongly support HB0864 and urge a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.