



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 40 – Maryland Energy Administration Study on Geothermal Heating and Cooling Systems and Geothermal Workgroup House Economic Matters Committee January 26, 2021

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 40 – Maryland Energy Administration Study on Geothermal Heating and Cooling Systems and Geothermal Workgroup. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

Oftentimes, in environmental legislation, there is a tendency to leap before looking. We have seen, over the years, multiple pieces of proposed legislation that set arbitrary deadlines for closures of entire industries, without any true consideration of the impacts those closures or shutdowns will have on workers and their families, communities, rate-payers, base-load energy demand, or the availability of existing clean energy alternatives.

HB 40 sets the stage for an inclusive conversation about energy and the environment, focused on the future of geothermal energy. It creates a workgroup, with all stakeholders, to develop a plan, moving forward, on how Maryland should structure our strategy toward geothermal energy.

The charge of the workgroup is focused on the correct questions to ask, for the environment, for our communities, and, most importantly for Maryland workers, “the potential for family-sustaining job creation resulting from the expansion of geothermal heating and cooling systems in the State”. If we are to craft effective and substantive environmental policy in Maryland, we must stay laser focused on workers and their families – and the enormous economic contribution that they make to Maryland – while avoiding the pitfalls of unintended consequences rising from poorly thought-out legislation that will do more harm than good.

Moreover, the inclusion of the actual men and women who do this work in Maryland on the proposed workgroup, is paramount to informing the members and policymakers who will

eventually promulgate the final report in December, as well as introduce legislation based on its findings. Maryland's geothermal workers need to be at this table, providing their expertise as well as their full-throated support for proposed policies that will create and maintain family-sustaining jobs in the geothermal energy sector. We can protect our environment, reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and create jobs that strengthen instead of weaken the economic base of Maryland in the process, but we can only do this with a comprehensive workgroup and study that prioritizes workers, their families, and their communities.

For our energy construction workers and their families, for Maryland's communities, and for the environment, **we urge a favorable report on HB 40.**