

**Testimony on HB 40**  
**Maryland Energy Administration Study on Geothermal Heating and Cooling Systems and**  
**Geothermal Energy Workgroup**

**Hearing Date: January 26, 2021**

**Bill Sponsor: Delegate Lorig Charkoudian**

**Committee: Economics Matters Committee**

**Submitting: Liz Feighner, Laurel MD - District 13**

**Position: Favorable**

As a homeowner who switched from a gas heating system to a geothermal heat pump system in 2009, I support **HB040 - Maryland Energy Administration Study on Geothermal Heating and Cooling Systems and Geothermal Energy Workgroup**. The bill will require the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to conduct a technical study of geothermal heating and cooling systems, establish a Geothermal Energy Workgroup, and direct the MEA, in consultation with the Workgroup, to develop recommendations for geothermal incentives in the state.

I can personally attest that geothermal heat pumps are extremely efficient and reliable. Our electric bills showed that we only increased our electricity usage marginally while eliminating all of our gas costs and usage for heating. We were quite surprised to see our electricity usage only rose minimally considering all our heating shifted from gas to all electric. We also were thrilled that our hot water heating was basically free in the summer since the excess heat extracted to cool our home is first used to heat our hot water prior to being pumped in our ground loops. The savings on our electric bill since 2009 has been incredible.

The downside was the initial cost of installing the system so I support this bill to conduct a comprehensive technical study to develop incentives to increase deployment of geothermal energy across Maryland. I support making geothermal systems accessible and affordable to any homeowner who will see immediate energy bill savings. Right now, only those with financial means have the ability to reduce their utility bills significantly while low-to-moderate income families continue to have a higher percentage of their expenses be for utilities with less efficient systems due to upfront costs of installing geothermal systems.

As a climate activist, I support this technology and increased incentives would help not only the accessibility of geothermal technology but also grow good paying green jobs in Maryland. We need to provide a better market for many Maryland-based companies that provide geothermal services.

Knowing that we no longer burn fossil fuels to heat our home is a wonderful feeling and makes our home much safer from the threat of gas explosions or accidental carbon monoxide poisoning as well as from indoor air pollution that a fracked gas heating system emits. While we had the luxury of making our home safer and healthier, others do not have that luxury so we need to study how to make geothermal more accessible for reducing utility costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the state of Maryland. If we do not meet this challenge of addressing the climate crisis now, we will pay dearly later.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote favorably for HB40.

Liz Feighner  
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