



HB 40 - SUPPORT

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Maryland Energy Administration Study on Geothermal Heating and Cooling Systems and Geothermal Energy Workgroup

Economic Matters Committee

January 26th, 2021

Dear Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Mike Tidwell, founder and Executive Director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network and Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund. I am before you today on behalf of the thousands of members my organization represents, to voice our support for HB 40, which will create a study of potential for geothermal expansion in Maryland. CCAN has been fighting for bold climate policies in Maryland for almost 20 years. We continue to push the state on a path that would avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis. We believe that this bill is another step towards achieving a clean energy future for the state of Maryland.

In the past few years, other states have set ambitious climate goals and have begun to implement policies to achieve said goals. We believe that in order for Maryland to achieve any ambitious climate goals, the state must consider every possible resource and reduction pathway.

We are well aware that the two biggest areas for emissions reduction are the electric grid and the transportation systems across the state. One area of concern is the emission reduction potential from the building heating and cooling of every building in the state. Geothermal processes for building temperature control are more efficient than current electric and gas systems, more resilient to disruption, more cost effective for the average consumer in the long term, and produce far less pollution compared to traditional systems.

By harnessing the thermal energy in the ground beneath our feet, geothermal systems are the most efficient, reliable, and lowest carbon approach to electrifying heating and cooling in buildings. Geothermal heat pumps (GHPs) are recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as among the most efficient heating and cooling technologies currently available and are up to 500% more efficient than standard heating systems. According to Maryland Commission on Climate Change's "Decarbonizing Buildings in Maryland" report, released in September of 2020, Geothermal heat pumps are up to 500% more efficient than standard heating systems and outperform all other electrification technologies, such as air source heat pumps, and offer even greater emissions reduction.

A study to explore the potential of geothermal technology within the state provides us with another tool in our belt that we can use to further reduce harmful emissions. The costs associated with the study are far outweighed by the potential gains we could acquire through the findings of the study.

The clock is ticking and the longer we wait to develop strategies to reduce emissions, the harder and more expensive it will become. We must begin to study strategies like geothermal energy as soon as possible. This bill will provide a guideline that the state must follow to better understand the feasibility of expanded geothermal system use in the state.

There is an old saying; “we do as we are; we become as we do.” I take this to mean that inaction breeds more of the same and action begets more action. This bill is an opportunity to take a small action that could lead to much greater actions. I implore you today, to be people of action.

I thank you for your time and I urge the committee to pass HB 40.

