



TESTIMONY FOR SB0296

Housing and Community Development - Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023

Bill Sponsor: Senator McKay

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0296 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Marylanders are very well aware of the cost that climate change will exact as it becomes more intense. We, with the help of the General Assembly, have passed the most impactful legislation to mitigate the impacts of climate change. There is much more to be done, but one of the most important aspects of addressing climate change is ensuring that people have the tools and the incentives to do what needs to be done.

We need homeowners to decarbonize in order to address a major driver of greenhouse gases. For low-income residents, this process is not straightforward. Many homeowners require fixes to the structural aspects of their residence before they can decarbonize. Roof repair, water leaks, mold remediation and other structural concerns must be addressed first before a property can be weatherized or benefit from energy efficiency or other upgrades like solar panels.

While there are a number of state and federal programs that fund weatherization, some health and safety repairs, and energy efficiency upgrades, there is a gap in the kinds of funds that are required to help low-income residents decarbonize. The bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Program (Program) within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to provide grants to local agencies for repairs to owner-occupied homes and small landlord rentals units to ensure they are free of structural and other concerns that will impact the decarbonization process. Additionally, the bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Fund (Fund) to support the grant program, improve coordination across home repair programs, and increase retention in workforce development programs. The Fund will consist of appropriated state dollars, federal funds, and other funds for the benefit of the Program.

This is a common-sense approach to a problem that needs to be solved. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.