

**Testimony of The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County Chapter, on the
proposed Green Buildings Now Act legislation (Bill 44-21)
December 7, 2021**

The Climate Mobilization applauds that Council is finally, more than four years after they declared a climate emergency, creating a modest annual revenue stream to finance investments to address climate change and reduce our carbon footprint.

We believe that only with the following improvements to the proposed Green Buildings Now Act legislation can this fund make a significant impact in meeting the county's expressed goal of eliminating 80% of all greenhouse gases in the next six years:

First, the amount of funding needs to be sized appropriately with respect to the enormous magnitude of the need. We see no analysis accompanying this legislation, nor have we had any conversations with the sponsor that appropriating 10% of the annual fuel energy tax revenue is sufficient to contribute significantly to meet this GHG emissions reduction goal. There is a need to remove the use of natural gas and replace it with electric or other very low carbon sources of energy in well over 200,000 buildings in the county, in addition to other significant required building improvements. Thus, it is imperative that at least an order of magnitude estimate of the cost of retrofitting existing commercial and residential buildings and the degree to which this modest amount of revenue will meet this need should be provided to the public prior to any vote or serious discussion on this bill. We trust that the analysis being prepared by Steven Winter Associates will help answer this question and therefore should be broadly circulated to the public and closely analyzed by Council before completing its deliberations on this bill. The percentage of fuel energy tax funds allocated to the Green Bank should then be determined based upon this information.

The green bank should be required to include in its annual report information specifying the use of this money and its estimated GHG emissions impact.

Second, restricting the use of this fund to building improvements that are very low carbon in their impact should be specified in the legislation. Bill 44-21 should either require a complete ban on equipment using fossil fuels, or at the very least require a definitive analysis demonstrating that there is no feasible alternative to the use of fossil fuels in a particular building.

This requirement to address fossil fuel use was strongly recommended by TCM to be incorporated into the council budget review process earlier this year. Despite a favorable response in conversations we had with a number of Council member staff, nothing whatsoever was done by the Council to implement this common sense request. Four years after an emergency declaration and in the face of dramatically accelerating planetary climate destabilization, we don't see how the Council can meet its climate goals without having at the

very least this kind of requirement incorporated into the Green Buildings Now Act, as well as applied to the appropriations of all County money.

Third, a minimum annual appropriation to the Green Bank must be specified in this legislation to ensure that, as the County switches to renewable sources of energy, the level of funding does not continuously decline year by year. As the Green Bank has recommended, the allocation would be at an annual amount that could adjust over time, increasing to a higher amount in future years. Similarly, a provision should be inserted to ensure that no other climate-action related appropriation should be reduced to appropriate a portion of the fuel energy tax allocated for green building initiatives under this legislation.

Fourth, we also ask that the bill be written to maximize the opportunity to leverage this money both against any private financing the Green Bank may obtain and to maximize existing or potential federal funding for climate related building transportation or other infrastructure improvements.

Fifth, we support recommendations to ensure adequate funds are available for low and moderate income households, that Green New Deal provisions for workers are incorporated and that community participation in the administration of these funds is guaranteed.

Adopting this legislation with the provisions outlined here should be looked at by the Council as only the first step in establishing a sound financial footing for the significant climate actions that will be required in the coming years.