

In Favor of Bill 13-22

Good afternoon. My name is Anne Manuel. I've been a voting resident of Silver Spring for 37 years. I very much appreciate the opportunity to address the committee on this very important topic. I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Bill 13-22 that would require electrification of all new buildings in Montgomery County.

I often find myself at a loss for words to express how urgent is our task of addressing climate change. In moments of daydreaming, I frequently find myself remembering what summers were like when I was a child, or even a young adult, and we had never heard of global warming. Our world seemed so much more secure, our future so much less frightening. Now it is no exaggeration to say that the not-too-distant future looks downright apocalyptic. Floods, droughts, wildfires, and fatally extreme heat are destroying lives around the world. And as many of you have pointed out, the intensification of these problems represents an existential threat to life on this planet.

I am a mother of two children in their 30s. I used to feel an almost biological obsession with the idea of grandchildren. Family has been such an endless source of joy and fulfillment for my husband and I – I was desperate for my children to have families of their own. It's hard to put in words how strong that desire was for me. But something has changed in the last 3-4 years as the climate scenarios scientists have long predicted began unfolding before our eyes.

I no longer want grandchildren. I do not want my children to have children. I simply can't stand the thought of deliberately subjecting a child to life under the conditions we are hurtling towards.

But I am so encouraged by the bill put forward by County Executive Marc Elrich and councilmember Hans Riemer to require the decarbonization/electrification of all new construction, major renovations, and additions by January 2024. Adopting this measure would put Montgomery County in the company of jurisdictions like Ithaca, NY, Los Angeles, Washington state, Denver, and Washington DC in tackling one of the largest single sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

In Maryland, methane gas (aka "natural gas") is responsible for 29% of our greenhouse gas emissions and more than half of those emissions come from residential and commercial buildings. Nationwide, the American Gas Association boasts that it connects at least one new house to gas *every minute*. Since gas appliances are long-lived, this locks our buildings into fossil fuel use *for decades*. The good news is that there are efficient electric appliances that can replace all major gas appliances from water heaters and heat pumps to induction cooking stoves. New construction can rely exclusively on these new appliances.

Of course electricity is only as clean as the fuel that is used to generate it. Right now, about 58% of Maryland's electricity is produced by fossil fuels. But our fuel sources are getting cleaner everyday with the increased availability of wind and solar power.

I'd like to add a few words about cost, as I imagine that will be an issue raised by the bill's opponents. While retrofitting existing buildings would obviously include considerable up-front costs, installing all electric appliances in new construction would not incur those costs. Further, going electric is likely to have a beneficial impact on homeowners utility bills. According to data from the Federal Energy Information Administration, fuel costs for heating using heat pumps are lower than those for methane gas. There are many reasons – economic, climate, and health – for moving as quickly as possible to electrifying buildings. Bill 13-22 would take an important step in the right direction.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views.

Anne Manuel