



July 21, 2022

The Honorable Gabe Albornoz
and Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, Sixth Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

RE: Bill 13-22, Buildings – Comprehensive Building Decarbonization

Dear Council President Albornoz and Members of the Council:

Atlantech Online shares the County's goal of a greener society. I am writing today to express opposition to and raise serious concerns about Bill 13-22, which would eliminate natural gas in all commercial and residential buildings and replace it with electricity.

The U.S. power grid is already under tremendous strain from lack of investment in new transmission lines and repair of existing facilities. Power outages over the last six years have more than doubled in number compared to the previous six years, according to a Reuters examination of federal data and noted in this [article](#); it is a must read. Renewable energy solutions will put even more pressure on the system. And upgrading the grid won't be cheap or easy. It will require regulators to approve huge rate increases that will face strong opposition from consumers. Before legislating a program that will add more pressure onto the grid that serves us, County officials, specifically this bill's sponsors, need to engage in direct talks with Pepco to learn, in detail, how it will be able to handle the increased demand because of a shift from natural gas to electricity, and what the cost will be to consumers in our community.

Further, before putting in place laws that will reduce demand for natural gas, the County needs to determine how Washington Gas will respond. The bill allows exemptions to the all-electric mandate for emergency back-up systems and some types of businesses. But, as fewer buildings are powered by natural gas, we fear that Washington Gas will no longer invest or have the resources to keep the network operating effectively and efficiently as it does today. Further, we fear that those who are exempt, like hospitals that are part of our critical infrastructure, will face increased costs beyond what is financially feasible as the gas company seeks to keep service going with dwindling revenues.

The bottom line: Now is not the time for the County to be concerned with imposing changes that will force buildings to convert from natural gas to all electric. We face serious issues related to public safety, the physical and mental health of our citizens, increasing crime, guns, schools, and food insecurity. We should take care of these matters first. That's the responsible thing to do. At the same time, pushing Pepco to provide a more reliable network and holding them to environmental standards does make sense. Doing that would be smart business.

Thank you for considering our concerns and comments.

Sincerely,

Ed Fineran
President