

Testimony of Walter Weiss MD

Good afternoon. Thanks to the County Council for the opportunity to speak today on Bill No. 13-22. This important bill will electrify new homes and buildings in Montgomery County, reducing greenhouse gases and improving our health.

My name is Walter Weiss, and I am speaking as a member of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition. I am also a medical doctor.

Buildings make up 50% of the County's Greenhouse Gas emissions. This bill will reduce greenhouse gases from new buildings. As Maryland moves toward cleaner electricity, the benefits of making new buildings electric will increase. It is more expensive to retrofit a building than to make it all electric in the first place. Making new buildings electric now makes financial sense.

All electric buildings are also healthier buildings. As a doctor, I know that asthma is worse in buildings using gas or oil. This is especially important for children and people with lower incomes who are at a higher risk of asthma to begin with. An summary of many medical studies in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 42, Issue 6, December 2013, Pages 1724–1737, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyt150> concluded that

“Our meta-analyses suggest that children living in a home with gas cooking have a 42% increased risk of having current asthma, a 24% increased risk of lifetime asthma and an overall 32% increased risk of having current and lifetime asthma; per 15 ppb increase in indoor NO₂ level, children have a 15% increased risk of having current wheeze.”

In June 2022, the American Medical Association recommended that all new homes have electric stoves for health reasons. <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/a22-refcmte-d-report-annotated.pdf> see recommendation 439 page 16

Opponents of this bill raise several arguments but the facts are these:

1. Pepco can meet the energy needs if all new buildings are electrified.
2. Buildings such as hospitals which need backup power systems do not need gas but can use diesel generators.

3. Modern heat pumps work well down to 5 degrees. There is no need for backup fossil fuel heating systems.
4. All electric single family homes cost less to construct and operate than new mixed-fuel homes.

Just this month Washington DC passed a bill requiring all new commercial buildings to be electric. Montgomery County should do the same.

Thank you