

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2026 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 479 (Senator McKay)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Environment - Building Energy Performance Standards and Energy Use  
Intensity Targets - Exemptions**

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This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) from requiring a covered building that received a use and occupancy permit before June 1, 2022, to comply with building energy performance standards (BEPS) or energy use intensity (EUI) targets developed in accordance with the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA) until it becomes necessary to replace lighting systems; heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems; or other major components of the covered building due to component failure or the end of life of those components.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General/special fund expenditures for MDE increase significantly (likely by more than \$1.0 million) in FY 2027 for one-time contractual costs to develop a database; significant general/special fund expenditure increases continue in the out-years to hire staff. BEPS implementation is delayed for affected covered buildings, and State expenditures (multiple funds) may decrease in the near term as a result. Special fund revenues may decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in FY 2031 from the delayed collection of alternative compliance pathway (ACP) fees.

**Local Effect:** Local expenditures may decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in FY 2027 due to the bill's prohibition, as discussed below. Local revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Meaningful.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** “Covered building” means a building that (1) is a commercial or multifamily residential building in the State or is owned by the State and (2) has a gross floor area of 35,000 square feet or more (excluding the parking garage area). The term does not include (1) a building designated as a historic property under federal, State, or local law; (2) a public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school building; (3) a hospital; (4) a manufacturing building; or (5) an agricultural building.

### *Climate Solutions Now Act – In General*

CSNA made broad changes to the State’s approach to reducing statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and addressing climate change. Among other things, CSNA accelerated previous statewide GHG emissions reductions targets originally established under the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act by requiring the State to develop plans, adopt regulations, and implement programs to (1) reduce GHG emissions by 60% from 2006 levels by 2031 and (2) achieve net-zero statewide GHG emissions by 2045.

### *Building Energy Performance Standards*

To accomplish these goals, among other things, CSNA requires MDE to develop BEPS for covered buildings that achieve (1) a 20% reduction in net direct GHG emissions by January 1, 2030, as compared with 2025 levels for average buildings of similar construction and (2) net-zero direct GHG emissions by January 1, 2040. To facilitate the development of these BEPS, MDE must require covered building owners to measure and report direct emissions data to the department each year beginning in 2025. The provision requiring MDE to set a standard that achieves net-zero direct GHG emissions for covered buildings terminates December 31, 2029.

### *Implementing Regulations*

CSNA also required MDE to adopt regulations to implement BEPS by June 1, 2023. The regulations must meet several specified requirements. As altered by Chapter 844 of 2025, among other things, the regulations must (1) include EUI targets by building type, as specified; (2) include specified special provisions, exceptions, and exemptions from BEPS requirements; (3) include an ACP allowing an owner of a covered building to pay a fee for GHG emissions attributable to the building’s failure to meet direct GHG emissions reduction targets; (4) to the extent authorized by law, include financial incentives recommended by the Building Energy Transition Implementation Task Force; and (5) include an annual reporting fee of \$100 per covered building, adjusted for inflation, to cover the administrative costs of the BEPS program.

MDE initiated the regulatory promulgation process to implement the required BEPS regulations in December 2023 but ultimately withdrew the regulations in December 2024 while simultaneously adopting a similar version of the regulations that took effect December 23, 2024. The adopted regulations establish BEPS and related benchmarking and reporting requirements under COMAR 26.28.

Of note, the adopted regulations do not include site EUI standards, which are required under statute. The fiscal 2025 budget as enacted included language restricting funding for the final development and submission of regulations that address site EUI targets and standards until MDE submits, among other things, a report on site EUI costs and alternatives to site EUI for meeting GHG targets. The required report components were incorporated into a larger report required under Chapter 844. MDE anticipates that the report will be submitted by December 31, 2026, and that the other related requirements will be completed in 2027.

**State/Local/Small Business Effect:**

*Maryland Department of the Environment*

*Administrative Costs:* Although a reliable estimate of the increase in costs for MDE to implement the bill cannot be made at this time, MDE anticipates that its expenditures increase by at least \$1.0 million in fiscal 2027 to develop a database to track permit documents for buildings that received a use and occupancy permit prior to June 1, 2022, and their lighting and HVAC systems in order to determine when it becomes necessary to replace those systems (or other major components of the covered building) and, therefore, when they become subject to BEPS under the bill. MDE also advises that it incurs significant costs to hire staff (likely beginning in fiscal 2028) to conduct thousands of inspections of covered buildings to be able to properly implement the bill's prohibition. MDE notes that there are thousands of covered buildings in the State and that it does not currently track much of the information needed to determine which buildings must comply with BEPS under the bill.

Although MDE's Air and Radiation Administration (ARA), which implements the BEPS program, has, in the past, largely been funded with general funds, in the last two fiscal years, ARA has been funded primarily with special funds from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) and the Maryland Clean Air Fund. In fact, the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2025 (Chapter 604) altered the required uses of SEIF to include paying costs associated with ARA. It is unclear whether sufficient special funds will be available to cover the additional costs resulting from the bill; thus, this analysis assumes that a combination of general and special funds may be needed. To the extent SEIF special funds are used, the net impact of the bill on SEIF expenditures may be less if

the Maryland Energy Administration, the State agency that administers SEIF, reduces other existing or planned SEIF spending as a result of the bill.

*Alternative Compliance Pathway Fee Revenues:* As noted above, pursuant to CSNA and its implementing regulations, under BEPS, beginning in calendar 2030, owners of covered buildings may come into compliance with net direct emissions standards by paying an ACP fee for GHG emissions in excess of the standards. Under the bill, implementation of BEPS is likely delayed; thus, special fund revenues for the Maryland Clean Air Fund likely decrease from delayed ACP fees. Any such impact occurs as early as fiscal 2031, when, under current law, ACP fee revenue is anticipated to begin accruing. Although, a reliable estimate of any foregone ACP fee revenue cannot be made at this time, given the number of potentially affected covered buildings in the State, it may be significant.

*State/Local/Small Business Effect as Owners of Covered Buildings*

Expenditures are likely delayed, and thus decrease, at least in the near term, for owners of covered buildings that received a use and occupancy permit before June 1, 2022, and are no longer required to meet BEPS until it becomes necessary to replace lighting systems, HVAC systems, or other major components of the covered building due to the failure of those components or as a result of the end of life for those components. Affected covered building owners could include State agencies, local governments, and small businesses. The extent of the delay in BEPS implementation depends on the lifespan of each covered building's lighting systems, HVAC systems, or other major components. The near-term cost savings may be significant for some affected building owners, particularly with respect to covered buildings that would have otherwise required costly retrofits in order to meet BEPS beginning in calendar 2030. However, in the long term, affected entities still need to meet BEPS when the affected components are replaced, and those entities that choose to delay the implementation of BEPS due to the bill will forego any cost savings that otherwise would have been realized from implementing energy efficiency measures under BEPS during that time period.

With respect to covered buildings owned by the State, to the extent any costs that otherwise would have been incurred to implement BEPS would have been funded through the capital budget, there is no effect on total capital spending, which is established annually by the Governor and the General Assembly through the capital budget process. However, any decrease in costs for State capital projects due to a delay in BEPS implementation results in an increase in available funding for other State capital projects.

## **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1415 of 2025.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1217 (Delegate Wivell, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

**Information Source(s):** Calvert and Prince George's counties; City of Annapolis; Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; Interagency Commission on School Construction; Maryland Department of the Environment; Maryland Department of Labor; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Kathleen P. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510