

**To: Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund**

**From: Steve Raabe, President  
OpinionWorks LLC**

**Date: February 28, 2024**

**Subject: Maryland Polling on New Building Standards and Clean Technologies**

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund commissioned this statewide poll of Maryland registered voters to assess support for legislative proposals to maximize the adoption of clean and energy-efficient heating and cooling technologies.

**This poll identifies very strong voter support for policy proposals that would create health and safety standards for new buildings, phase in clean HVAC technologies, require that new home heating systems also provide air conditioning, and expand the EmPOWER program to make new technologies more affordable. This support is bi-partisan, reaches all corners of Maryland, and is driven by deep concerns about climate change, a strong sense that air pollution is worsening in the state, and worries about the affordability of utility bills.**

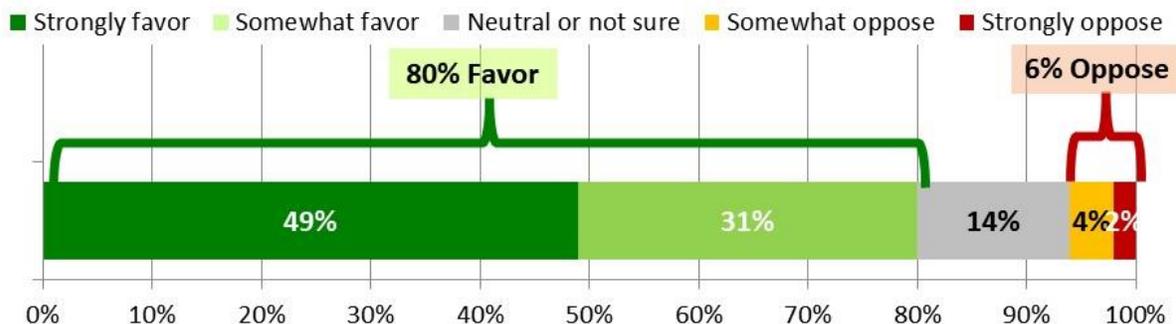
These findings are based on our statewide poll of 899 registered voters, conducted online and by telephone from February 19 to 21, 2024. The poll has a potential sampling error of  $\pm 3.3\%$  at the 95% confidence level. A more detailed methodology statement is found at the end of this memorandum.

### Strong Support for Legislative Proposals

#### Better Buildings Act

A proposal to create health and safety standards for new buildings in Maryland, known as the Better Buildings Act, enjoys overwhelming voter support. Four out of five Maryland voters (80%) favor this legislation. A near-majority of 49% favor it *strongly*. Only a small minority of voters (6%) are opposed to the legislation, with the remaining 14% undecided.

### Better Buildings Act

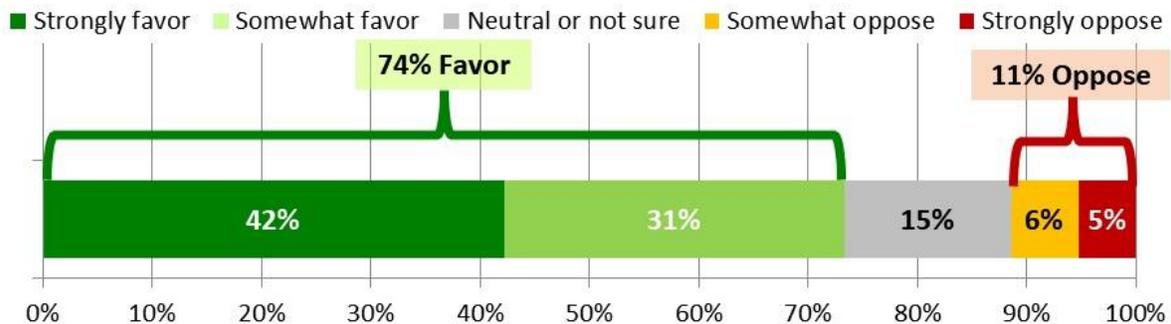


Would you favor or oppose legislation called the "Better Buildings Act," which would create health and safety standards for new buildings built in Maryland to maximize energy efficiency and require builders to install the latest high-efficiency HVAC equipment to deliver cleaner air and stabilize energy bills?

### Phasing in the Sale of Clean HVAC Technologies

Three-quarters of Maryland voters (74%) favor healthy air standards that would phase in the sale of clean HVAC technologies, rather than fossil fuel-powered heating equipment such as gas furnaces and water heaters. More than four voters in ten (42%) favor this proposal *strongly*. Only 11% of voters oppose it, with 15% unsure.

## Phasing in Clean HVAC Technologies



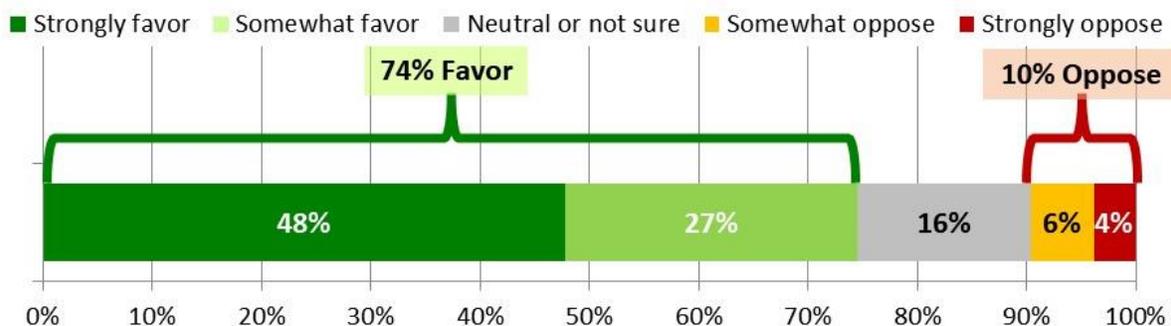
A recent analysis found that fossil fuel heating equipment in Maryland, such as gas furnaces and water heaters, cause three times more smog-forming air pollution than all the power plants in the state. Would you favor or oppose healthy air standards for HVACs and water heaters that would phase in the sale of the latest clean HVAC technologies to deliver cleaner air and healthier communities across Maryland?

*Numbers may not appear to add correctly due to rounding.*

### Requiring That New Home Heating Systems also Provide Air Conditioning

Three out of four Maryland voters (74%) favor ensuring that new home heating systems in the state use technology that can provide both heating and air conditioning. Almost half of the State's voters (48%) favor this proposal *strongly*. Only 10% of voters oppose this requirement, with 16% unsure.

## Requiring That New Home Heating Systems also Provide Air Conditioning



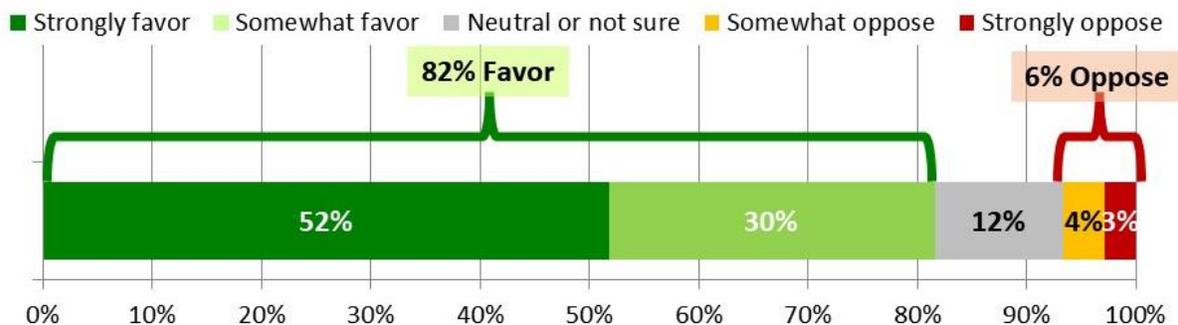
Would you favor or oppose ensuring that all Marylanders have access to life-saving cooling during extreme weather events by requiring that new home heating systems sold in the state use the latest energy-efficient technology that can provide both efficient air conditioning as well as heat, all in one HVAC unit?

*Numbers may not appear to add correctly due to rounding.*

### Requiring the Latest Quality Construction Codes and Clean Energy Technologies

More than four out of five voters (82%) favor “quality construction codes and clean energy technologies that maximize energy efficiency, reduce energy bills, and protect residents from dangerous outdoor temperatures for days at a time, even during a power outage.” A 52% majority of voters *strongly* favor this proposal. Only 6% oppose such standards, with 12% undecided.

## Requiring the Latest Quality Construction Codes and Clean Energy Technologies



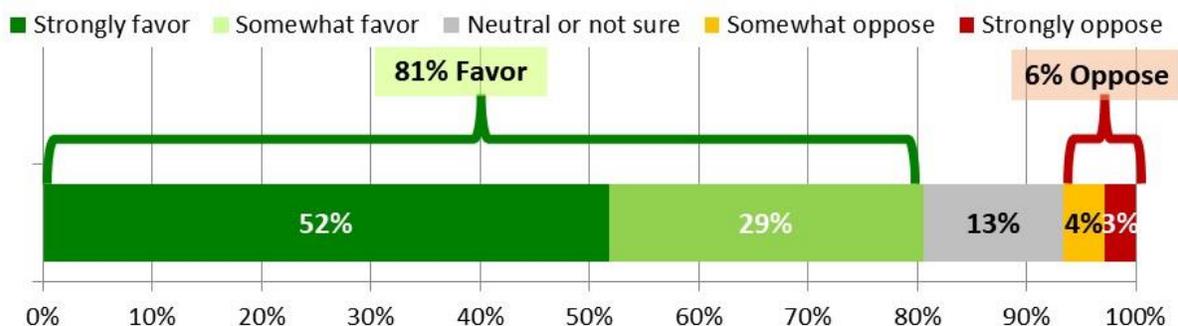
The number of days over 90 degrees in Maryland could more than double in the coming decades. Would you favor or oppose healthy building standards that ensure all new homes and buildings in Maryland use the latest quality construction codes and clean energy technologies that maximize energy efficiency, reduce energy bills, and protect residents from dangerous outdoor temperatures for days at a time, even during a power outage?

Numbers may not appear to add correctly due to rounding.

### Expanding Rebates and Incentives Through the EmPOWER Program

Marylanders overwhelmingly want to make clean air HVAC technologies more affordable. Four out five voters (81%) favor expanding Maryland’s energy efficiency program called “EmPOWER,” which provides rebates and incentives for clean HVAC technologies. A 52% majority *strongly* favor expanding EmPOWER. A small 6% minority of voters are opposed, with 13% undecided.

## Expanding EmPOWER



Would you favor or oppose expanding Maryland’s energy efficiency program, called “EmPOWER,” to offer rebates and incentives to help make the latest clean air HVAC technologies more affordable for Maryland residents and reduce health-harming air pollution?

Numbers may not appear to add correctly due to rounding.

**Bi-Partisan, Far-Reaching Support for These Proposals**

All five of these legislative proposals garner very broad support across the electorate – **crossing all party lines and supported by voters of various racial and ethnic identities**. For four of these proposals, **support is even higher among people who are most engaged with the political process** – in other words, those who are most likely to go out and vote.

**Voter Support by Voter Subgroup**

|   | All Voters | Likely Voters | Party Registration |             |              | Race/Ethnicity |                  |          |       |
|---|------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|----------|-------|
|   |            |               | Democrats          | Republicans | Unaffiliated | Asian          | African American | Hispanic | White |
| Better Buildings Act                                    | 80%        | 82%           | 86%                | 68%         | 80%          | 67%            | 83%              | 77%      | 83%   |
| Phasing in Clean HVAC Technologies                      | 74%        | 74%           | 80%                | 57%         | 75%          | 74%            | 76%              | 71%      | 73%   |
| New Home Heating Systems also Provide Air Conditioning  | 74%        | 76%           | 81%                | 59%         | 75%          | 67%            | 80%              | 78%      | 73%   |
| Latest Construction Codes and Clean Energy Technologies | 82%        | 83%           | 88%                | 72%         | 77%          | 70%            | 89%              | 80%      | 81%   |
| Expanding the EmPOWER Program                           | 81%        | 85%           | 87%                | 69%         | 79%          | 67%            | 84%              | 80%      | 83%   |

Support is strong for all five of these measures, regardless of the geographic region of the state.

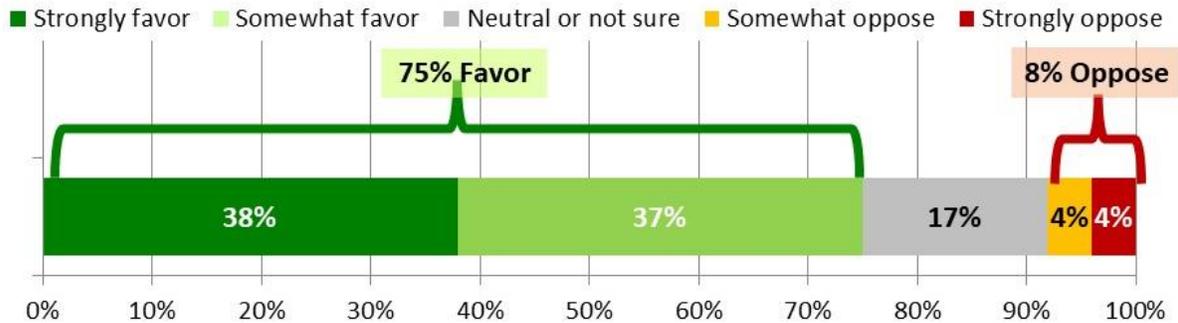
**Voter Support for Policy Proposals by Jurisdiction or Region**

|   | Balt. City | Balt. County | Anne Arundel | Howard County | Montgomery | Prince George's | Western MD | Southern MD | Eastern Shore |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Better Buildings Act                                    | 86%        | 77%          | 87%          | 88%           | 75%        | 78%             | 80%        | 76%         | 81%           |
| Phasing in Clean HVAC Technologies                      | 76%        | 80%          | 82%          | 84%           | 71%        | 74%             | 50%        | 70%         | 70%           |
| New Home Heating Systems also Provide Air Conditioning  | 83%        | 82%          | 75%          | 85%           | 66%        | 78%             | 59%        | 72%         | 78%           |
| Latest Construction Codes and Clean Energy Technologies | 84%        | 88%          | 86%          | 81%           | 81%        | 84%             | 76%        | 65%         | 87%           |
| Expanding the EmPOWER Program                           | 84%        | 87%          | 80%          | 83%           | 76%        | 81%             | 69%        | 79%         | 82%           |

### An Additional Question on the Better Buildings Act

In a separate poll, we asked an additional question on the Better Buildings Act emphasizing that these houses would be built with electric HVAC equipment, and found similar levels of support.

## Better Buildings Act



**Would you favor or oppose legislation called the “Better Buildings Act,” which would create health and safety standards for new buildings built in Maryland to maximize energy efficiency and require all new construction to be built with all-electric, high-efficiency HVAC equipment to deliver cleaner air and stabilize energy bills?**

This question was asked on a Maryland statewide poll conducted online among 510 registered voters February 24 and 25, 2024. This poll has a potential margin of sampling error of  $\pm 4.5\%$  at the 95% confidence level. All other questions discussed in this memo were contained in the poll conducted February 19-21, 2024.

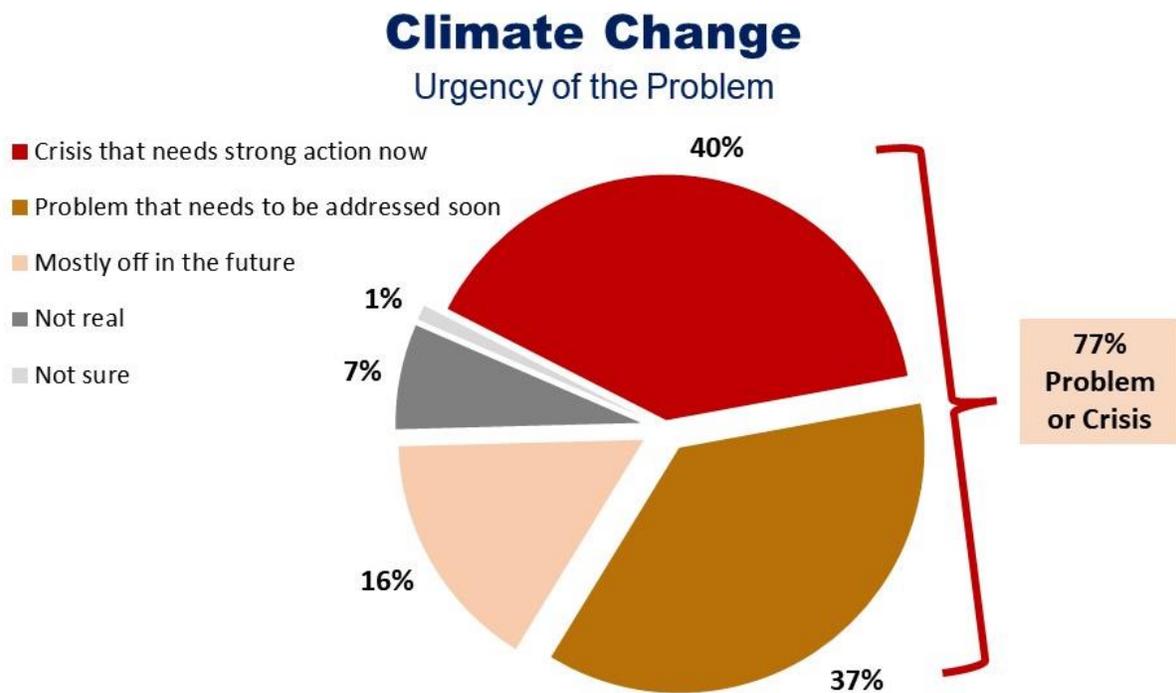
*(continued, next page)*

**Deep Voter Concerns That Drive High Levels of Support for These Policies**

Strong underlying concerns and priorities held by Maryland voters help explain these high levels of support. Leading the list is the palpable level of concern among Maryland voters about climate change.

Forty percent of voters believe “climate change is a serious crisis that needs strong action now.” Another 37% believe “climate change is a problem that needs to be addressed soon” – totaling more than three-quarters of voters who see climate change as a problem or a crisis that needs to be addressed.

Note that a majority of voters in all parties in Maryland see climate change as a problem or crisis: 88% of Democrats, 88% of unaffiliated voters, and a 51% majority of Republicans view climate change that way.



**Which of these comes closest to how you think about climate change?**

Climate change is a serious crisis that needs strong action now.

Climate change is a problem that needs to be addressed soon.

The climate is changing, but the problem is mostly off in the future.

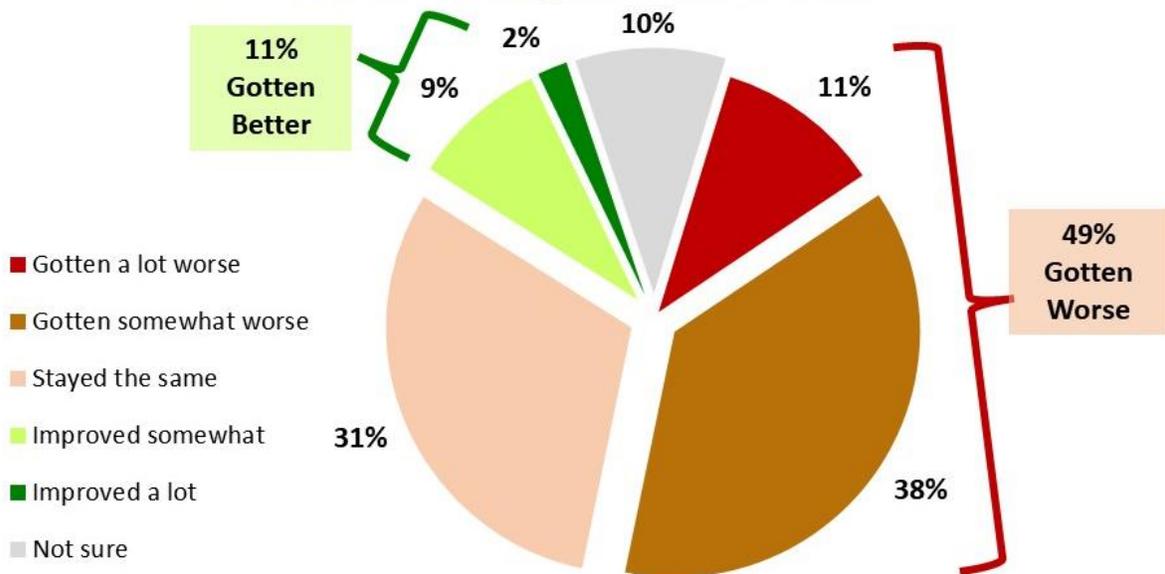
Climate change is not real.

Second, there is a widespread perception that the problem of air pollution in Maryland is getting worse. Only about one out of ten voters (11%) believe that air pollution has improved in the last five years. Almost five times as many (49%) believe the problem of air pollution has gotten worse. About one-third of voters (31%) think the problem has “stayed the same,” and the remainder are not sure.

*(continued, next page)*

## Air Pollution in Maryland

Perceived Change in the Last 5 Years

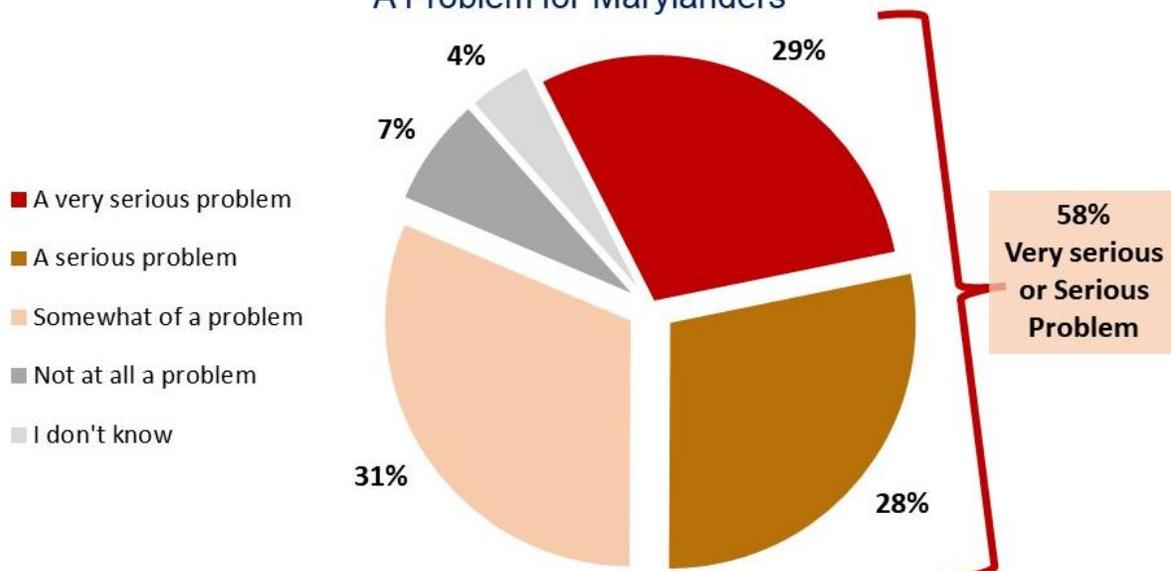


How would you say that air pollution in Maryland has changed over the last five years?

A third key factor is the level of concern about the cost to heat and cool people’s homes. Nearly six voters out of ten (58%) believe the cost of utilities is a serious problem or a very serious problem. Another 31% believe it is “somewhat of a problem.” Voters in Baltimore City were the most concerned, with nearly three-quarters (70%) of Baltimore City voters seeing the cost of utilities as a serious or very serious problem – much higher than the statewide numbers.

## Cost of Utilities

A Problem for Marylanders



How serious of a problem, if at all, are any of these things in Maryland?

The cost of utilities to heat and cool people’s homes

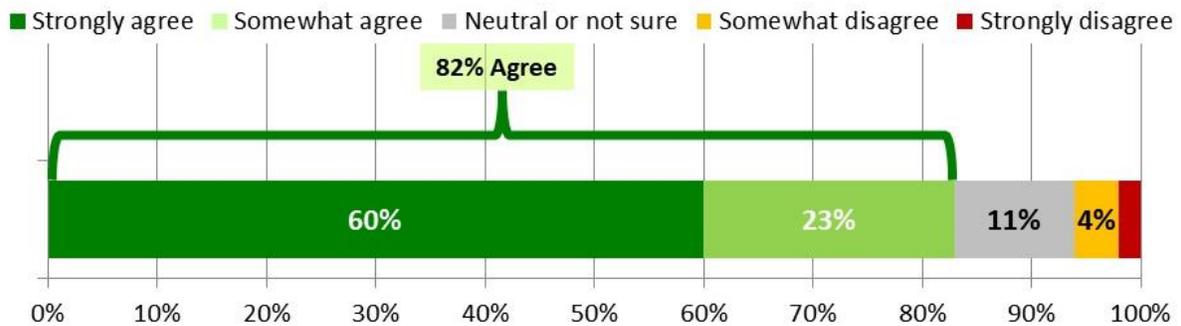
Numbers may not appear to add correctly due to rounding.

### Key Attitudes

Four attitudinal questions illustrate the level of importance that voters place on policy measures that would strengthen building standards and improve the health, safety, and affordability of heating and cooling technologies.

- 82% of voters believe that “all Marylanders deserve access to cooling in their homes so they can stay safe and healthy during life threatening extreme heat events.”

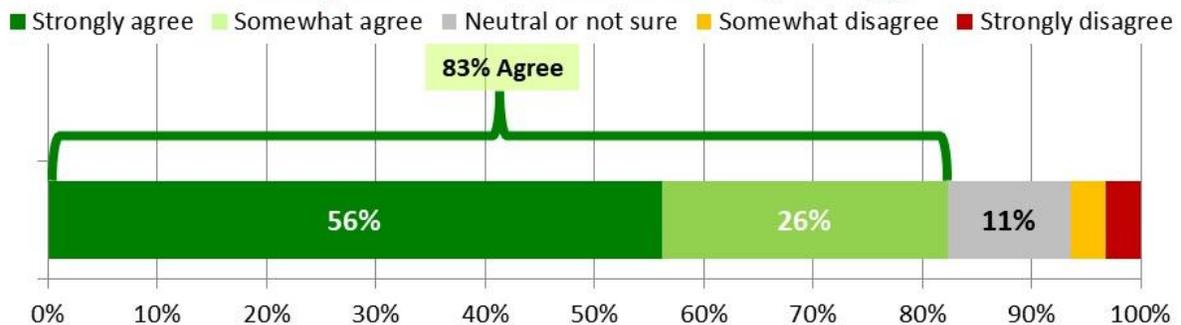
#### **As summers get hotter, all Marylanders deserve access to cooling in their homes so they can stay safe and healthy during life threatening extreme heat events.**



Please say if you agree or disagree with these statements, and how strongly.

- 83% want building standards to focus on the future, agreeing with the statement, “By passing statewide healthy building standards, we can ensure our kids grow up in homes that can protect them from extreme temperatures while conserving energy.”

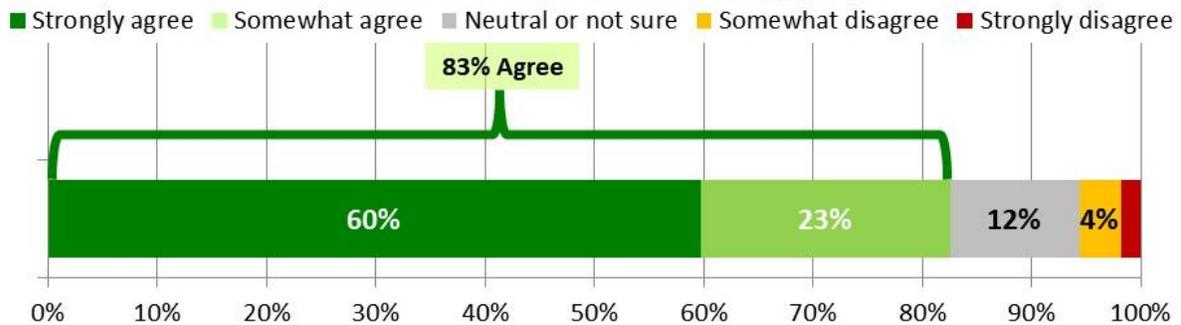
#### **Our homes should be built for the future, not the past. By passing statewide healthy building standards, we can ensure our kids grow up in homes that can protect them from extreme temperatures while conserving energy.**



Please say if you agree or disagree with these statements, and how strongly.

- 83% are concerned about the most vulnerable in society, agreeing that “Residents that are more vulnerable to the negative health effects of air pollution and extreme heat, such as children, the elderly, and low-income people, deserve to live in homes with clean air and stabilized energy bills.”

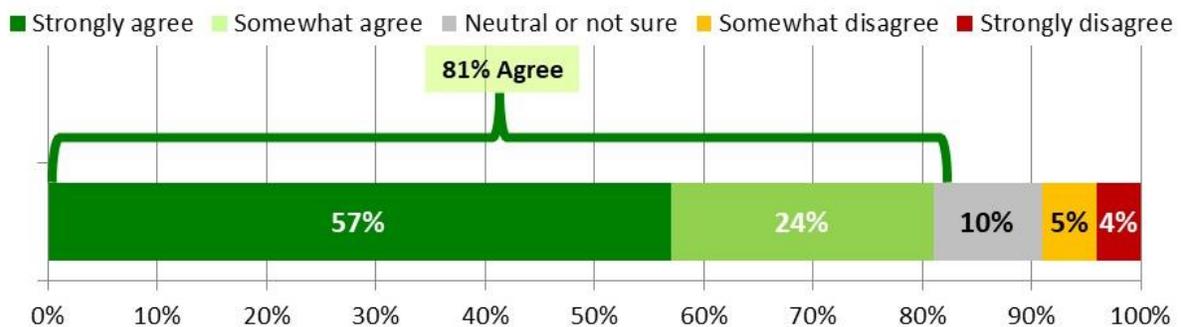
**Residents that are more vulnerable to the negative health effects of air pollution and extreme heat, such as children, the elderly, and low-income people, deserve to live in homes with clean air and stabilized energy bills.**



Please say if you agree or disagree with these statements, and how strongly.

- 81% want the State’s leaders to act, agreeing with the statement, “Our state leaders must pass policies that can help communities across the state transition toward healthier, more affordable homes.”

**Our state leaders must pass policies that can help communities across the state transition toward healthier, more affordable homes.**



Please say if you agree or disagree with these statements, and how strongly.

**Conclusion**

Voters overwhelmingly endorse the Better Buildings Act and other policy measures designed to create health and safety standards for new buildings and ensure access to cleaner and high-efficiency HVAC equipment and technologies. These high levels of support are driven by deep underlying concerns among Marylanders about climate change, air quality, and affordability of utilities. Marylander voters are indicating they want the state to act.

## Methodology

### How This Poll was Conducted

A total of 899 interviews were conducted statewide February 19-21, 2024 among randomly selected Maryland registered voters. A cross-section of Marylander registered voters were surveyed online, and live telephone interviewers reached additional voters on both wireless and landline telephones, to ensure the poll best represented all segments of the electorate. Sampling targets were adhered to throughout the interviewing process to ensure that the sample represented the statewide electorate geographically, by political party, gender, age, and race or ethnicity. Following interviewing, statistical weights were applied to ensure the sample most closely mirrored the characteristics of the statewide electorate. This poll produces a margin of sampling error no greater than  $\pm 3.3\%$  at the 95% confidence level, meaning that at least 19 times out of 20 the actual results would differ by no more than that margin if every registered voter in the state had been interviewed.

### Brief Background on OpinionWorks

OpinionWorks is a non-partisan firm that conducts frequent opinion studies at the state and local level across the country. Since 2007 we have been the polling organization for *The Baltimore Sun* newspaper in Maryland and have polled for numerous other media and advocates throughout the nation. We are engaged by state and local government agencies from Delaware to Oregon to assess public needs and preferences. We measure health attitudes and practices for public health departments and advocates, assess alumni engagement and prospective student expectations for colleges and universities, evaluate donor and volunteer relationships for non-profit organizations, and study human decision-making to inform behavior change efforts on environmental and health questions.