

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1543
Environment - Climate Crisis and Education Act**

**Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 1543, legislation that establishes the Climate Crisis Initiative and aims to dedicate \$350 million a year to the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund to help pay for the once-in-a-generation reforms to move our public schools from great to world-class.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Over the last three years, educators across the state have been fully engaged in the most critical conversation we have had in a generation: how do we fundamentally, equitably, and sustainably improve our schools and prepare our students for the jobs of today and the future. From the beginning, this conversation has appropriately been focused on research-based best practices to develop the policy reforms necessary to make this happen. And from the beginning, it has been clear that supporting these world-class schools and programs would require new investments in state and local funding.

MSEA supports passage of an adequate, sustainable, and predictable revenue stream that will adequately fund both the operating and construction costs of our public schools. A great public school for every child means our students have updated technology, small manageable classes, safe and modern schools, proper healthcare and nutrition, and highly qualified and highly effective educators. The work of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) further recommends improvements to access to pre-k and career technical education, as well as expansion of the educator workforce and increased salaries to help deliver individualized instruction and recruit and retain the best workforce in the country. Senate Bill 912 can be part of the solution for how we fund and deliver these critical policy reforms for the next generation of Marylanders.

For years now, Maryland has shown environmental leadership. Similar to the principle of charging fines for littering or other forms of pollution, Maryland already puts a price on carbon emissions. The state is part of an interstate cap-and-trade cooperative—the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)—that charges fees on power plants for climate pollution. Since it was created, the RGGI has generated \$648 million to help low-income households with energy



assistance, energy efficiency, and clean energy programs. That fee is now gradually increasing over the next ten years as a result of regulations put in place by the Hogan Administration.

The Climate Crisis and Education Act takes this successful, bipartisan, and market-based practice and expands the fee on all fossil fuels coming into the state. It's one of several methods before the legislature for modernizing our tax code to fully account for curtailing negative externalities, like climate change, and finding sources of revenue to fund critical programs in the state, including the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

While pricing carbon as a revenue source is inherently temporary if we are to truly address the climate crisis, it is still estimated that this legislation would generate billions of dollars annually long after the Blueprint is fully implemented.

This committee has wrestled with innovative tax proposals and some other measures that have varying degrees of popularity or revenue yield. This proposal is both popular and generates meaningful revenue. MSEA's survey research indicated that two-thirds of Marylanders would support a carbon price on fossil fuels to pay for improving our public schools.

The Climate Crisis and Education Act is all about creating a better future for our kids and helping to make the Blueprint a reality. That is why MSEA urges actions to fully fund the new formulas associated with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and supports a favorable report on House Bill 1543.