



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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**HB 1545 – Electric Generation – Transition from Fossil Fuels – Carbon Dioxide Emissions
Rate and Transition Account
House Economic Matters Committee
March 5, 2020**

OPPOSE

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 1545 – Electric Generation – Transition from Fossil Fuels – Carbon Dioxide Emissions Rate and Transition Account. My name is Donna S. Edwards and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members I offer the following comments.

Attached to this testimony is the “Resolution on Climate Change and Jobs” that was unanimously passed at the 32nd Biennial Convention of the Maryland State and D.C. AFL-CIO, held in November of 2019. The resolution puts the issue of good job creation in the emerging clean energy sector first and foremost, with an understanding that the path forward must include an inclusive energy portfolio. The entire labor movement in Maryland is committed to ensuring that – as we transition to a cleaner energy sector – workers are not sacrificed on the altar of environmentalism. If we, as a State, are going to make greater strides towards cleaning our energy, we must not put the cart before the horse. We must lead with good jobs and make the hard decisions necessary to hold harmless the workers that have provided us the energy needed to live, work, and play.

HB 1545 addresses none of this and leads with the environment instead of workers. It summarily closes operations at coal fired power plants over an extremely abbreviated timeline – with the first to close only three years from now – and only a notional nod to what workers will need to transition from those jobs. The bill allots Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) money to the transition, but not nearly in the amount that would be needed to address the thousands of workers directly affected nor the thousands more in support industries and in our communities. Moreover, the estimates of available SEIF money are misleading, considering the amount of pending legislation, just this Session, alone, that targets the same fund, and an unknowable future of RGGI payments into it. Even DLS says it does not have enough information to evaluate the

potential effects of the bill, and any fiscal impact will not occur until FY 2024 at the earliest. This would be right when workers are losing their jobs.

On the energy front, coal is base-load energy. The plants in question provide consistent, scalable energy that is necessary for peak usage like sweltering August days. Without this backbone on the grid, and with no comparable clean energy source that can operate on-demand, the future of Maryland energy will be a combination of brownouts and smart-metering hundreds of thousands of Marylanders out of their air conditioning. There has been no appetite within the General Assembly to expand nuclear energy in our State, let alone natural gas, or any other form of scalable on-demand forms of energy. We cannot simply turn off our coal plants in three years, and expect the energy needs of citizens to be met, not to mention growing with population.

We ask that you help us re-define our priorities on climate change and clean energy jobs. We ask that you join with workers in ensuring that our transition to a post-carbon energy economy lifts up everyone, and leaves no one behind. HB 1545 is not the pathway to do. We support a path forward that is sustainable, clean, meets the energy needs of Marylanders, holds harmless the workers in coal fired power plants, and addresses the future of work in a clean energy industry.

We urge an unfavorable report on HB 1545.

Resolution #7: Resolution on Climate Change and Jobs

WHEREAS, numerous studies suggest that there is major job creation potential from tackling the climate crisis, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and transitioning to a low-carbon, sustainable economy; and

WHEREAS, the overall lack of high-road jobs in the green economy and the prevalence of non-union jobs in the limited existing green sectors, such as solar and residential retrofitting, have dampened enthusiasm for the long-promised “clean, green economy” among workers and labor organizations that are anxious to address the climate crisis and build a pro-worker, equitable green economy; and

WHEREAS, the fossil fuel industries have high rates of unionization; and

WHEREAS, strong job and training quality standards are needed in the clean and renewable energy sector, among them being prevailing wage, state-approved apprenticeship job training requirements, project labor agreements, and labor peace agreements; and

WHEREAS, a functioning jobs pipeline could ensure that local workers from our communities have a path to career employment by offering access to training programs such as direct-entry pre-apprenticeship programs and other skill-building opportunities; and

WHEREAS, these job and training quality standards should be central to all “climate jobs” proposals; and

WHEREAS, climate efforts should include funding and guaranteed protection for workers and communities who are displaced or negatively affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy; and

WHEREAS, the AFL-CIO has developed strong policy proposals for protecting workers who are impacted by climate protection policies. These proposals provide a just transition, including 70% wage replacement and 80% health benefit replacement for up to three years, as well as “bridge to retirement” funding for workers who are near retirement.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO supports measures that ensure that energy infrastructure development creates good jobs and builds our industrial base by requiring project labor agreements, prevailing wage, apprenticeship job training requirements, Buy Union and Buy America provisions, labor peace, card check neutrality, robust training requirements for all projects, and includes all the labor requirements passed in the Clean Energy Jobs law.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO in facing the challenge of impacting energy policies embraces a balanced and just approach for workers, communities, manufacturers, businesses and consumers and will continue to work with community, business and environmental allies committed to recognizing the need for worker protections, rights, and sustainable wages and benefits, to maintain a wide range of energy sources, traditional and newer, to secure Maryland’s and the District of Columbia’s competitiveness.

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO will advocate for legislation, administrative rules, and the development of an initiative to enable a transition that is just for workers and communities directly affected by the transition to a clean energy economy by providing income, benefit, and retraining for comparable wage jobs, as well as a bridge to retirement, as part of the just transition and concurrently support the creation of these policies in an equitable fashion.

Submitted by: *Donna S. Edwards, President*
Maryland State and D.C AFL-CIO
Delegate, AFSCME 112
Gerald W. Jackson, Secretary-Treasurer
Maryland State and DC. AFL-CIO
Delegate, UA 486

Committee: Legislation

Convention Action: Unanimously passed

