

March 5, 2020

The Maryland House of Delegates, Economic Matters Committee

HB1545 - Electric Generation - Transition From Fossil Fuels - Carbon Dioxide Emissions Rate and Transition Account

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Davis,

Maryland remains home to six large coal-fired power plants contributing to bird declines, public health problems, climate change, and forest and stream degradation.

For this reason, Audubon Maryland-DC asks you to vote FOR SB0887/HB1545 to help Maryland kick its coal habit.

Power plants that burn coal pump out toxic and dangerous pollution like lead, mercury, selenium, smog-forming nitrogen oxides, and acid rain-causing sulfur pollution. Surface water and soil acidification have been especially deadly for the state's trout streams and many species of birds, especially at high elevations.

Over 85% of Marylanders live in counties that do not meet EPA healthy air standards for smog pollution, and our coal plants are a major source of smog-forming pollution. Smog exacerbates respiratory problems like asthma, which disproportionately impacts children, the elderly, and communities of color in Maryland.

Coal plants are the #2 source of in-state climate pollution. They provide less than 14% of the state's electricity but generate over 75% of the pollution from in-state electricity generators.

Other states, like New York, New Mexico, Montana, Colorado, and Washington, are already implementing coal transition policies. Coal plants are on their way out across the country. Maryland needs a plan to responsibly guide us off of coal and ensure our workers and impacted communities are making decisions about how to thrive in the clean energy economy.

This legislation will provide worker retraining, fill wage gaps, supplement retirement security, and support the tax-bases of affected localities.

Currently every one of the state's coal plants is sited in marginalized communities. The Chalk Point Generating Station was built adjacent to the oldest African-American community in Maryland (Eagle Harbor) and the discharge of the heated water is routed just outside its harbor on the Patuxent River. The Brandon Shores Power Plant and Herbert A. Wagner Generating Station are located near poor and disadvantaged communities in northern Anne Arundel County and southern Baltimore City.


Closing these plants in Anne Arundel, Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles, and Allegany counties is essential in order to truly fight for justice for all people and to eliminate

environmental disparities in certain communities. It's time to free impacted communities from the oppression of polluted air and a degraded environment.

Maryland cannot meet its climate action goals and transition to a cleaner and safer energy economy while continuing to burn coal for power. In 2020, we need a plan to phase out our state's coal-fired power plants and support the impacted workforce with a fossil fuel worker transition plan.

On behalf of our 19,000 Maryland supporters, I ask that the committee vote FOR SB0887/HB1545 to help keep Maryland a forward-thinking and healthy state for both people and birds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Curson".

David Curson
Interim Executive Director and Director of Bird Conservation
Audubon Maryland-DC