

## **House Bill 896 - Environment - Statewide Green Business Certification Program – Establishment**

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 26, 2020

### **SUPPORT**

My name is Doug Gatlin, CEO of Green Seal, Inc., and I am pleased to be with you today to voice my organization's support for House Bill 896, which charges the Maryland Department of the Environment with creating a statewide program that mirrors and conforms with the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program (GBC).

For background, Green Seal® is a globally recognized nonprofit organization with a mission to transform the economy for a healthier, greener world. Since its founding in 1989, Green Seal has applied rigorous standards for health, sustainability and product performance to its certifications, and today has certified more than 30,000 products and services from companies ranging from Staples and Georgia-Pacific to Marriott and Hilton.

An ecolabel pioneer, Green Seal's early standards for low-VOC paint and sustainable bath tissue were the first such standards in the U.S. and catalyzed global shifts to healthier, safer and lower-carbon products in those categories. Green Seal's benchmark standard for multipurpose cleaners in the commercial and institutional marketplace spurred rapid progress in healthier cleaning formulations, and today protects at least 7 million schoolchildren from exposure to toxic chemicals and asthma triggers.

As a green consumer advocate, Green Seal has a proven track record of banning or restricting hazardous chemicals in our standards long before governments take action or consumers become aware of the risks. For example, Green Seal prohibited the neurotoxin methylene chloride in our standards in 1993, a quarter century before EPA issued a rule banning the acutely lethal chemical in consumer paint strippers, following growing consumer concern.

Green Seal's standard for Green Cleaning Services was the first in the nation and remains the most rigorous, requiring green product purchasing, custodial best practices, and extensive staff training. Specified by numerous local governments, corporations, and institutions, compliance with this standard is only achievable by an elite group of cleaning service programs and providers. The State of Maryland boasts 10 certified building services contractors who collectively provide certified green cleaning to more than 48 million square feet of buildings throughout the state<sup>1</sup>. Maryland also boasts three public institutions that have earned Green Seal certification: Howard County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and the University of Maryland College Park, collectively adding another 10 million+ square feet of healthy green certified space.

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<sup>1</sup> Green Seal Certified Building Service Contractors include: Bolana Enterprises, Beltsville, MD; Executive Building Maintenance, Bethesda, MD; Red Coats, Inc. Bethesda, MD; USSA, Bethesda, MD; Associated Building Maintenance, Co., Crofton, MD; Palm Facility Services LLC, Kensington, MD; the Wilburn Company, Linthicum, MD; Service Master Chesapeake, Millersville, MD; PMM Companies, Rockville, MD; and Executive Maintenance, Inc., Elkridge, MD.

Turning to the proposed establishment of a Statewide Green Business Certification Program, Green Seal supports House Bill 896 in its goal of enhancing the current MDE Green Registry Program by mirroring Montgomery County’s successful Green Business Certification Program. Green Seal believes this provides value to Maryland’s businesses as well as its citizens, as it encourages business to participate in credible third-party certifications that independently verify sustainability measures. This approach is administratively efficient, avoids re-inventing already robust national standards, and stretches State resources by leveraging the national marketing and recognition provided by existing third-party certification bodies and their participating organizations.

Green Seal believes four main components of sustainability are:

- a. Preserving the Climate
- b. Ensuring Clean Water
- c. Minimizing Waste
- d. Protecting Human Health

We appreciate that the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program is structured to incentivize participants to take actions relating to these four components and to measure progress along the way.

In particular, Green Seal encourages addressing how the products we use every day in our homes, schools and workplaces affect indoor air quality and health and well-being. Conventional cleaning, building and maintenance products often contain chemicals linked to asthma, cancer and reproductive harm, even when they are advertised as “natural” or “green.” Maryland already has leading-edge policies in this regard: it is one of only 11 states that currently require the use of eco-certified products in schools. This is especially important as many of the hazardous chemicals restricted by third party eco-certifications are exactly the ones children are most vulnerable to.

Lastly, we applaud the Ease of Implementation/Collaborative Approach in both the Montgomery County Program and the State Green Registry. We encourage MDE to include references to Green Seal certified building service contractors and Green Seal certified hotels in an expansion of its state-level recognition, while also leveraging Green Seal and other relevant third-party certifiers to create a program that provides robust health and environmental benefits, while keeping administrative costs low and maximizing public recognition through collaboration with nationally recognized eco-certifications.

For the aforementioned reasons, **Green Seal, Inc.** supports House Bill 896 and respectfully urges a favorable report.