



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Adam Ortiz  
*Director*

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

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 26, 2020

**SUPPORT**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice-Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 896. My name is Doug Weisburger and I work for the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection where I manage the County's Green Business Certification Program.

We are excited by the prospect of the State creating a voluntary Green Business Certification Program (like Montgomery County's) to complement the existing Maryland Green Registry, managed by the Department of the Environment. We think the two programs can be merged into one to create two tiers. The Green Registry would serve as a foundational program and on-ramp to a certification program involving third party verification for green business leaders wanting to take their day-to-day environmental practices to the next level.

We see a number of benefits in such an arrangement:

- **Utilization of Third-Party Expertise** – The Montgomery County Green Business Certification is an “umbrella” program in which we automatically recognize businesses certified through any of 10 robust third-party standards. The County doesn't have specific expertise in sectors like commercial cleaning or greening a restaurant, so we simply rely on these third parties to conduct verification and provide businesses with guidance. There are no costs to us, and the third-party organizations are paid by the business pursuing certification.

- **Flexibility** – We continually add new third-party standards. A couple of years ago we decided to add organic farms; last year we became aware of a very high standard for organic textiles after an organic mattress producer opened a showroom in the County. Similarly, the State can continually add third party standards.
- **Cascading Benefits** – With a third-party certification program, jurisdictions can establish programs that incentivize businesses to pursue ambitious sustainability goals. In Montgomery County, certified green businesses in our vendor database, get a green business designation which allows procurement officials to narrow their vendor search by using a green screen. In Prince George’s County, which has a program like Montgomery County, certified green businesses can get a property tax benefit.
- **Drives B to B Commerce** -- Businesses seek out other businesses that share their values. Being able to easily identify corporate sustainability leaders through a State certification program, would, for example, drive a Green Seal certified cleaning company to seek out a Certified Green Restaurant to cater their board meeting. Similarly, that Certified Green Restaurant will seek out a local farm for its organic fruit, vegetables, etc.
- **Accelerate Development of the Green Economy** – Establishing a green business certification program will help drive demand for green products and services. This, in turn, will help establish Maryland as a green business destination and bolster a fundamentally important engine of our economic development.

Montgomery County Government supports House Bill 896 and respectfully urges a favorable report.