



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 803
Facilitating University Transformations by
Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act
February 25, 2021
Support with Amendments

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 803. We fully support the intent of this bill and we, as a System, are dedicated to the same critical goals of reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and of achieving carbon neutrality. We're also very appreciative of the advocacy of our students who continue to lead this charge. With their grassroots efforts, and under the leadership of each campus president, our institutions have already demonstrated significant progress. For example:

- Since 2007, we have completed (or are developing) nearly 80 "Green" (LEED Silver or better) facilities. More than half of them are funded with non-State or auxiliary resources.
- All USM facilities are designed and built to the standards of the State's High Performance (Green) Building Program, and all meet similar standards for "smart growth" and "coast smart" construction.
- All USM institutions and the Universities at Shady Grove signed the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment and are publicly reporting their progress in reducing carbon emissions as part of a national database,
- Collectively, USM institutions have documented a 34% reduction in CO₂ emissions (a reduction of nearly 300,000 metric tons each year) since 2007. That's the equivalent of removing 64,000 cars from the road, or making 35,000 homes carbon neutral.

USM institutions are key participants in State energy reduction programs, including efforts in support of the Governor's Executive Order. In the last decade, our institutions have made significant reductions in energy use by changing campus behavior, utilizing energy performance contracting, and an enhanced reliance on renewable energy sources. The average energy reduction exceeds 15%, while the average use of renewable sources is 37%. The University of Maryland College Park reached 95% purchased electricity.

As you can see, we share the goals of this bill. We would ask, however, for the opportunity to work with the Committee and the bill sponsor to address and amend some of the aspects of the bill to improve our ability to achieve those goals.

We are confident, for instance, that we can achieve the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, given a moderate enhancement of current resources. Accelerating the target for “net zero” emissions to 2025 (for campus heating plants and purchased electricity) and to 2035 (for campus travel and commuting) will require a significant shift in resources, resulting in major impacts on State operating support and changes in campus funding priorities.

A Statewide rollout of carbon reduction goals, extending beyond higher education to all of State Government, is also preferable, given the integrated nature of the State’s operating and capital funding programs, where changes in support for one agency can impact available support for all others. The identification and purchase of appropriate carbon offsets would also be facilitated by wider coordination among all State agencies.

A planned, methodical shift to clean, renewable energy sources made as building and plant components reach the end of their life cycle will be far more affordable, but it will take a few decades to fully implement.

The goal of carbon neutrality is critically important and the technology to achieve it is improving every year. We’d like to take the time to do this right.

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