

February 18, 2020

House Bill 66: Electric Generation - Transition From Fossil Fuels - Carbon Dioxide Emissions Rate and Transition Plan and Fund (Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021)

Economic Matters Committee

Sponsors: Brooks & Barve

Position: Favorable

Economic Matters Committee Members,

I am formally submitting this written testimony in favor of HB66, known as the Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021. Humans have altered 75% of Earth's land and more than half of the marine environment. In 2018 CO2 passed 400ppm for the first time in 4 million years only speeding up the climate change faster than at any time in the last 100 million years ago when the water raised approx 30 feet. This will only worsen with an expected additional 1 billion more people expected by 2030. At the same time former President Trump ended or paused over 100 regulations that protect our air, soil and water and took us out of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Have you ever heard doctors say, "you are what you eat"? Well, you are what you drink, breathe and you are where you live. Multiple studies (Lancet, Harvard, etc) over the last decade state that approximately 10M people every year die from a pollution related illness globally. That's one out of every 5-6 people on the planet at a cost of about \$4.6 trillion dollars annually. And these are likely underestimates. These deaths are more than all car accidents, suicides, homicides and wars combined. That number is more than Tuberculosis and Malaria combined (4th and 5th leading infectious disease killers worldwide). Another way to look at it is, pollution causes 15 times more death than all wars and all other forms of violence. It outpaces smoking deaths by 2.2M, alcohol related deaths by 7M and car accidents by 8 million. We all know what the medical problems associated with cigarette smoking are and don't even question them. So let's talk about coal from a medical perspective. For purposes of correlation, you can think of burning coal the same as you would smoking a cigarette. Cigarette smoke contains well over 7000 chemicals with around 70 of those chemicals linked to medical issues like cancer. **Coal also contains about 70-80 hazardous compounds that are toxic to humans. These hazardous compounds include poisons like mercury and lead, Nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, fine particulate matter, carbon dioxide, hydrochloric acid, cancer causing agents like arsenic and benzene, radioactive elements and many more.**

The toxic compounds in coal enter the body similarly to toxic compounds in cigarettes, through the lungs. The health impacts of coal increase respiratory infections, cause wheezing, chest tightness, emphysema and asthma, all of which increase ER visits and hospital admissions and lead to premature death. Coal decreased exercise tolerance with just 5-10 minutes of exposure. Coal related pollution increases your risk of heart attacks, strokes and lung cancer. And of course, children and the elderly are more susceptible. People living in close proximity to coal plants live on average 12 years less than a community that is only 7 miles further out. People living near coal plants have been found to suffer 2-5 times the health impacts of people living further away. This was particularly shown in Baltimore where due to the 3 coal-fired power plants at the time of a study done in 2010, showed they had the highest mortality rate from air pollution of all cities in the

country. Statistically, 1 out of 24 people have asthma but of those living in close proximity to coal-fired power plants, 1 out of 4 have asthma.

And of course, let's not forget who's mostly affected. You guessed it. People of color. The NAACP has stated that race, even more than class, is the number one indicator for the placement of toxic facilities in this country which is also why this same data shows that the black population suffers disproportionately, with five times as many visits to the ER, three times more hospitalizations and two and-a-half more premature deaths than was seen in the white population because 70% of African Americans live within 30 miles of a pollution coal plant. In Maryland, over 85% of the population lives in counties not attaining federal air quality standards for smog. Where you live shouldn't determine how long you live or the quality of life we have access to. So if you've never smoked and never had any respiratory issues and one day you feel chest tightness or shortness of breath, it might just be pollution.

Too costly to fix? Of course not. Let's look at a couple of examples. California is the USA's biggest economy and the 5th biggest economy in the world. After passing some of the strictest environmental laws in the country, the California economy grew by 12.4% even outpacing the great state of Texas since 2011. Also, one of the fastest growing jobs in the US according to the Bureau of Labor and statistics: wind turbine technician. The renewable energy industry currently employs approximately 800K people. Solar technician jobs now outnumber coal jobs. Green jobs grew 17 times faster than the economy in 2016. While coal runs out in West Virginia, companies are training their employees to become solar panel installers. To put it in perspective, renewable energy creates more jobs than Apple, Google, Facebook and Twitter combined. Right here in Maryland, we are building one of the largest offshore wind farms in the nation that is expected to create 9700 jobs and contribute approximately \$74M dollars in state tax revenue over the next 20 years. Solar is now the world's largest renewable energy employer and the US's largest employer in electric power generation.

Even if you don't believe in doing this for the health of Charles County residents like myself, you just might be a believer in the financial aspect of this. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we've just witnessed the complete disaster of our economy that caused a 32.9% drop in our GDP, millions unemployed, trillions of dollars pumped into the economy by the Federal Reserve and US Treasury that is basically subsidizing private business, has caused our deficit and debt to soar, thousands of businesses closed, some never to open again, to name a few, all of which could have been avoided with health prevention and trillions in savings. Not only does changing to renewables from coal save our health, but it grows our economy and keeps money locally.

We need a just transition from coal to renewable energy for communities that have been burdened by the health impacts of coal pollution. **Please support HB66 the Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021.**

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