

**Committee: Economic Matters**  
**Testimony on: HB0066 “Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021”**  
**Organization: Climate Law & Policy Project**  
**Submitted by: Donald M. Goldberg, Executive Director**  
**Position: Favorable**  
**Hearing Date: February 18, 2021**

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Climate Law & Policy Project strongly supports HB66 and urges a favorable report.

HB66 “Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021” will:

- Set firm retirement dates for Maryland’s remaining coal-burning plants, moving the state beyond coal by no later than 2030. The retirement dates are both in line with international timetables for climate action and consistent with the recent plant retirement announcements from Maryland coal plant owners.
- Establish a Fossil Fuel Transition Account, including an initial \$40 million of funding, which can be used to support workers who face layoffs because of a coal facility closure, support local governments who potentially face a loss in tax revenue, and incentivize new energy efficiency and clean energy projects in affected communities.
- Initiate a longer-term planning process that centers the need for a more just transition away from dirty fossil fuel facilities, one that prioritizes impacted communities workers, historically polluted communities, and economic development.

Burning coal for electricity is dangerously heating our planet, changing our climate, and making our families and communities sick. Maryland cannot meet its climate action goals and transition to a clean energy economy while continuing to burn coal for power. In 2021, 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.

In 2020, Maryland entered the year with six active dirty coal-fired plants and ended the year with five of the six plants that have either retired or have announced plans to retire.

The Maryland Commission on Climate Change has recommended that the state transition off of all of its dirty coal plants by no later than 2030. The Commission, made up of scientists, union leaders, & business representatives also recommended that the state establish a coal transition plan to support impacted workers and communities.

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.

Maryland’s coal plants are a significant source of toxic water pollution. The state’s coal-burning power plants discharge toxic heavy metals like mercury, arsenic, and selenium. Arsenic causes cancer; mercury impairs brain development in children; and selenium damages the nervous system.

Other states – like New York and Washington – have enacted coal transition policies. Coal plants are on their way out across the country, but we need a plan with certainty in Maryland. 60 national and sub-national governments, including 8 US states, are members of the Powering Past Coal Alliance.

Maryland already pledged itself to clean electricity generation. Under the Clean Energy Jobs Act, Maryland is committed to generating more than enough clean renewable electricity from in-state solar and offshore wind to replace the electricity from Maryland’s coal plants.

For these reasons, Climate Law & Policy Project urges a favorable report on HB66.