



Committee: Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
Testimony on: SB835 - “Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE Act)”
Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing
Person
Submitting: Diana Younts, co-chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 9, 2021

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB835. MLC’s Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and grasstops organizations focused on getting State level climate justice legislation passed. Each bill for which we advocate is evaluated through an equity lens, with a particular focus on how disadvantaged communities are affected by the bill and the bill’s climate impact. SB835 has particular merit because it will have both a significant impact on fighting climate change and because a percentage of any funds expended on carbon offsets must be for the benefit of communities most impacted by environmental harms.

The FUTURE Act establishes that all Maryland public universities must achieve complete carbon neutrality by 2035, with an intermediate step requiring carbon neutrality for direct emissions and purchased electricity in 2025. It will require that our universities shift from contributing to climate change, to instead becoming models for sustainable living for future generations. The Future Act does not mandate how the universities achieve carbon neutrality, but does allow them to achieve carbon neutrality through the purchase of carbon offsets that meet the following criteria:

- Starting in 2025, purchase at least 5% of its offsets in Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay watershed, or through an environmental justice offset project. An environmental justice offset project is designed to focus on a community most impacted by environmental harms.
- In 2035, 25% of its offsets must meet this requirement and 10% must benefit an

environmental justice community;

--In 2045, 50% of its offsets must meet this requirement; and

--In 2055, 75% of its offsets must meet this requirement.

If carbon offsets are used to achieve carbon neutrality, they must undergo a verification process to ensure they are effective.

Among the co-benefits of this approach to combatting climate change are that in-state carbon offsets support reforestation and renewable energy projects in Maryland that will bring better air quality, water quality, biodiversity, job opportunities, and environmental education for people in our state and is a good complement to Climate Solutions Now.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for SB835.