



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 17, 2021

**HB61 - Environment- Statewide Green Business Certification Program- Establishment
Statement of SUPPORT**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and esteemed members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB61, a bill that will establish a statewide Green Business Certification Program, based in part on the successful program currently running in Montgomery County. This bill passed out of the Environment and Transportation Committee unanimously, and passed out of the House of Delegates on a consent calendar vote of 133-2.

In December 2009, Montgomery County, in partnership with Montgomery College and the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce launched a green business certification program to encourage businesses to implement environmentally-friendly practices. The program is voluntary and robust, and includes participation from a number of diverse businesses from hotels to restaurants, grocery stores and local farms.

The state of Maryland currently operates a Maryland Green registry, a voluntary statewide program that businesses can self-evaluate and determine how they qualify. Around 560 businesses state-wide participate, and the program provides “resources to help businesses and other organizations set and meet their own goals on the path to sustainability.”¹ Businesses sign up online, identify 5 green practices, and provide one measurable result.

By contrast, the Montgomery County program is more rigorous. It includes a separate audit by the Department of Environmental Protection every three years, and allows businesses to receive recognition if they are already enrolled in other recognized national green business certification programs. Businesses certify that they engage in certain green best-practices including waste management/reduction, reducing the use of certain pesticides on agriculture, using organic or alternative materials and engaging in methods that promote increase air and water quality. In 2015, the certification program expanded eligibility as an umbrella recognition program, accepting businesses certified through outside third party standards and allowing nearly all sectors to be eligible.² Sectors eligible for certification include restaurants, offices, hotels, cleaning companies, landscapers, home-based businesses, farms and others.

¹ MD Green Registry: <https://mde.maryland.gov/MarylandGreen/Pages/Home.aspx>

² Third-parties included: B Lab, Green America, the Green Restaurant Association, Green Seal, the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System, Veriflora® Sustainably Grown, USDA Organic Program, Certified Naturally Grown and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).

Under Montgomery County's program, the DEP makes an appointment every three years with the GBC business or soon-to-be-GBC business and goes through a checklist.³ There are six sections of the application that include:

- organizational commitment,
- waste reduction,
- enviro purchasing,
- energy/water efficiencies,
- transportation/travel practices,
- Sustainable Landscaping and Stormwater Management

There are 10-20 items under each of those qualifications. Some are as easy as putting up signs, others are more detailed like purchasing recycled content, or offering a mass transit benefit for employees that utilize it to get to work. The Montgomery County program charges businesses \$100 to enroll, however if the business is certified under a third-party program, those programs can range from \$100 to \$25,000.

By qualifying for any of the various certifications, businesses receive recognition and benefits from being a Green Business. These benefits include: increasing sustainability, increased consumer support and competition and creating a healthy work environment. Several states have Green Business Programs including VT, CA, AZ, CO, IL, NE, WA.⁴

This bill is identical to a bill (HB896) that passed out of the House of Delegates last year, but did not have enough time for consideration before your Committee prior to our early adjournment. MDE requested amendments to HB896 last session, which would enable Maryland to keep its existing Green Business registry, while enabling the department to consult with Montgomery County to adopt enhancements to the program. The House of Delegates passed that bill, as amended, with the support of MDE in 2020. The version before you today is identical to that bill.

Respectfully, I request a favorable report on HB61. Thank you.

³ Montgomery County GBC Checklist: <http://www.mcgreenbiz.org/s/Green-Office-Application.xlsx>

⁴ National Green Business Tracker: <https://greenbiztracker.org/site/participating>