



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 15, 2021

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

Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein and esteemed members of the Environment and Transportation 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 is identical to a bill that passed out of this committee last session, and out of the House of Delegates, but did not have enough time for consideration in the Senate prior to our early adjournment.

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

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

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.

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

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. This committee passed the bill, as amended, with the support of MDE in 2020, and the bill passed out of the House as well. The version before you today is identical to that bill. Attached is a letter of support, which numerous individuals and organizations have added their names to in order to show their support for HB61.

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

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).

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

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

Letter of Support for HB61 - Environment - Statewide Green Business Certification Program - Establishment

Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

The undersigned individuals and organizations respectfully submit this letter of support for HB61 - Environment - Statewide Green Business Certification Program - Establishment, sponsored by Delegate Shetty. HB61 would establish a statewide Green Business Certification Program, based in part on the successful program currently running in Montgomery County. This bill is identical to the bill that passed unanimously out of the Environment and Transportation Committee and the House during the 2020 session, but was unable to pass out of the Senate due to the early adjournment.

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 and restaurants to grocery stores and local farms.

The Maryland Department of the Environment requested amendments to this bill 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. These amendments were added, and the bill was passed out of the House as amended. HB61 is identical to that bill, with the amendments included.

We respectfully request a favorable report of HB61.

- Maryland Sierra Club
- Clean Water Action
- Neighborhood Sun Benefit Corp.
- Global Communities
- CEM Design Architects
- Naturepedic Organic Mattresses
- Tricia Swanson; Vice President of Government Relations, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
- Dan Simons; Co-Owner of Founding Farmers Restaurant Group
- Douglas Weisburger; Senior Planning Specialist of Sustainability Programs, Department of Environmental Protection, Montgomery County Government
- Jerry Kickenson; One Green Montgomery
- George Chmael II; CEO, Council Fire
- Alice Varon; Executive Director, Certified Naturally Grown
- Tom Farquhar; Sandy Springs Gardens
- Susan Cottle Madden; Montgomery College