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Letter of Information
House Bill 708 - Comprehensive Climate Solutions
Senate Economic Matters Committee
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The Rural Maryland Council understands the need to take action related to climate change as rural Maryland contains almost 3,190 miles of shoreline. While House Bill 708 intends to reduce the effects of climate change and to help the communities of Maryland, there may be unintended consequences that come from the fast-paced reductions that the bill puts in place – achieving net-zero greenhouse gasses by 2045 and changing the goal of 40% by 2030 to 60% by 2032. Specifically, the Council is concerned about the lack of nuclear energy in the bill and the costs that could come as a result of removing natural gases too fast.

Marylanders still rely heavily on electricity sources outside of those such as solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources; they are still getting their sources of energy from nuclear, natural gas and coal. Data from the U.S Energy Information Administration shows that Maryland consumes more than five times as much energy as it produces. In 2021, Maryland generated 39.7 million megawatt hours (MWh) from all fuel sources. Of the energy produced, nuclear produced the most at 34% -producing almost 15 million MWh; followed by natural gas, producing 14.7 million MWh; and coal, producing 5.8 million MWh. Calvert Cliffs Nuclear facility is the only nuclear powerplant in Maryland and is scheduled to be decommissioned in the 2030s. Other plants providing energy to the State are located in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

If the current forms of energy are severely reduced, something must replace them. Thirty-five point five million of the 39.7 million MWh generated in 2021 came from nuclear, natural gas and coal, while wind and solar only produced a combined 2.3 MWh. This would require almost 90% of the current electricity production to be replaced or enhanced in some way. Nuclear already produces 14.7 million MWh or 41% of Maryland's energy.

Costs associated with the removal of fossil fuels from the energy portfolio will result in higher costs of electricity and heating for all Marylanders and will greatly impact those in rural and other underserved areas of the State who cannot afford to have their monthly heating and electricity bills to be increased. According to www.statista.com, 54% of the residential homes in Maryland are using a form of fossil fuel thermal heating (utility gas 43%, 7.94% fuel oil, kerosene, etc., 3.51% bottled, tank, or LP). We suggest as a part of this plan and methodology that it includes specific recommendations on thermal heating.

We believe there are opportunities in rural Maryland that can help accelerate clean energy solutions such as land available for renewable generation and workforce opportunities related to the construction of the facilities. Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration for House Bill 708.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.