



## **HB708 – Comprehensive Climate Solutions**

**Testimony before**

**House Economic Matters Committee**

**March 4, 2022**

**Position: Favorable With Amendments**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Brian Wessner, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB708**, to set ambitious but achievable climate goals and addresses environmental justice and climate equity. We appreciate the leadership of Chairman Barve and Delegate Stein in moving this bill.

Solving the climate issues facing Maryland is not a one-size-fits-all effort. HB708 acknowledges this reality and the need to achieve set goals in a timely manner, heeding the “delay means death” message in the February 28<sup>th</sup> report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. With amendments outlined in this testimony, including the priority amendments being put forth by Maryland Climate Partners and the Climate Justice Wing (see attached), HB708 targets elements of a lasting, and potentially life saving, solution through:

- ❖ **Committing Maryland to the goal of net-zero emissions by 2045**, with an interim goal of 60% reductions of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2032. Proposed amendment, supporting attached amendments put forth by the Maryland Climate Partners and the Climate Justice Wing, include:
  - Amend the interim date to 2030 to match the recommendation of climate scientists and those of the Senate proposal.
  
- ❖ **Creation of the Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub** to support the work so necessary to achieve these GHG reductions. Proposed amendment, supporting attached amendments put forth by the Maryland Climate Partners and the Climate Justice Wing, include:
  - Move the hub from the Maryland Energy Administration, placing it under the purview of the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC), as the goals of MCEC are better aligned with the goals of the hub.
  
- ❖ **Requiring the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to conduct research and data gathering on cumulative impacts and overburdened communities**, in consultation with the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable

Communities. Proposed amendments, supporting attached amendments put forth by the Maryland Climate Partners and the Climate Justice Wing, include:

- Ensure these duties are properly staffed
  - Ensure MDE's efforts lead to the establishment of strategies to advance environmental justice and advance climate equity
  - Ensure MDE's efforts lead to the creation of goals for funding directed to disproportionately affected communities
- ❖ **Creating the Climate Justice Corps** to support projects to reduce GHG emissions to overburdened communities and invest in a "green collar" workforce. Proposed amendment, supporting attached amendments put forth by the Maryland Climate Partners and the Climate Justice Wing, include:
- Incorporating collaboration with programs such as the Maryland Corps Program and the proposed Maryland Civilian Climate Corp included in SB528 to ensure that the jobs created to promote climate justice and clean energy projects are well paid and benefited.
- ❖ **Creating the Just Transition Employment and Retraining Working Group** to ensure that there is a just transition to clean energy, ensure that Maryland does not leave our workforce behind and to make policy recommendations for how to best serve fossil fuel workers in our State.
- ❖ **Extending the EmPOWER Maryland** program and increase the annual efficiency gains. This program is a critical tool in mitigating the energy burden faced by our most vulnerable residents.
- Incorporate provisions that better align EmPOWER Maryland with our climate goals and energy needs

These actions, when taken together, establish major elements necessary to achieve Maryland's GHG reduction goals. Given the recent volatility in the oil and gas markets, which may become a permanent "new normal", taking these actions now becomes more important than ever.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

**We respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments.**

Brian Wessner  
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Proposed Amendments  
*Climate Partners Coalition*

**Greenhouse gas reduction goals:**

- Page 7, line 5-6 - Overall GHG Goal - 60% by 2032
  - Amendment - 60% by 2030 to line up with Senate (for consistency)

**Climate Catalytic Capital Fund**

- SB528 creates the Climate Catalytic Capital Fund to promote environmental justice and to leverage increased private capital investment in technology development and deployment. This should be added to HB708 to support the work introduced in the bill.
- Amendment: Add language from SB528 starting on page 5, line 12 until page 7 line 27.
  - Note: amendments to this section of the bill include that the Fund may not be used for a project to install new equipment that uses fossil fuels or upgrades the efficiency of existing equipment that uses fossil fuels

**Environmental Justice:**

- Pages 4-6, goals for funding and targeted benefits to “disproportionately affected communities”
  - Amendment - replace “disproportionately affected communities” with “overburdened communities” with the following definition to align with other legislative initiatives and be more specific about impact. Add a requirement that 40% of funding for greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures go to “overburdened communities.”
  - **“OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY” IS DEFINED AS “AT A MINIMUM, AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY, IS A COMMUNITY THAT INCLUDES ANY CENSUS TRACT FOR WHICH 3 OR MORE OF THE BELOW INDICATORS ARE ABOVE THE 75TH PERCENTILE STATEWIDE:**
    1. PM 2.5
    2. Ozone
    3. NATA diesel PM
    4. NATA cancer risk
    5. NATA respiratory hazard index
    6. Traffic proximity
    7. Lead paint indicator
    8. Superfund proximity (npl sites)
    9. Risk management plan facilities proximity
    10. Hazardous waste proximity
    11. Wastewater discharge indicator
    12. Proximity to a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)
    13. % broadband coverage
    14. Asthma Emergency Room Discharges
    15. Myocardial Infarction Discharges
    16. Low Birth Weight Infants
    17. Proximity to power plants
    18. Proximity to a TRI facility

19. Proximity to a brownfield
20. Proximity to mining operations
21. Proximity to a hazardous waste landfill
22. Proximity to an unincorporated community

AND AT LEAST 25% OF THE RESIDENTS QUALIFY AS LOW-INCOME, OR THE AREA IS DESIGNATED AS AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY BY THE SECRETARY [of MDE]

Petition language for MDE to designate a community as “overburdened”: “IN ORDER TO DESIGNATE AN AREA AS AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY THROUGH THE PETITION PROCESS, THE SECRETARY MUST MAKE FINDINGS WITH RESPECT TO WHETHER THE AREA MEETS EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- (A) THE ANNUAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF THAT AREA EXCEEDS 125 PERCENT OF THE STATEWIDE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME;
- (B) A MAJORITY OF PERSONS AGE 25 AND OLDER IN THAT AREA HAVE A COLLEGE EDUCATION;
- (C) THE NEIGHBORHOOD DOES NOT BEAR AN UNFAIR BURDEN OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION; AND (D) THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS MORE THAN LIMITED ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING OPEN SPACES AND WATER RESOURCES, PLAYGROUNDS, AND OTHER CONSTRUCTED OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND VENUES. IF ALL OF THE CRITERIA ARE MET, THE SECRETARY MAY NOT DESIGNATE THE AREA AS AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY.”

### **Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub**

- We have concerns about housing the Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub in the Maryland Energy Administration due to the Administration’s input on the MCCC report and recommendations. We would like to move the administration of the Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub to the Maryland Clean Energy Center.

### **Landfills:**

- **Pg 6, line 5-23** Amend the deadline for adoption of regulations January 2023 or June 2023.
- Consider appropriations to MDE’s air department to support the landfill methane work

### **Just Transition Employment Working Group**

- Membership of the working group, on pg. 12, lines 10 strike “one representative of the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra club, selected by the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club” and replace with “Two representatives of the environmental community”
- On page 14, line 11, strike “counter” and substitute “address”.
- Fenceline communities should be defined (page 14, line 20)

## Climate Justice Corps

- Page 20 - align the compensation of Climate Justice Corps participants with other civilian corps to ensure they are paid positions. This will also bring consistency with SB528 as amended.
  - Amendment: On page 20, in line 24, strike “A” and substitute “(1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A”; in lines 25 and 26, strike “(1)” and “(2)”, respectively, and substitute “(I)” and “(II)”, respectively; and after line 28, insert: “(2) STIPENDS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND WRAP-AROUND SERVICES SHALL BE PROVIDED TO STIPEND VOLUNTEERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 24, SUBTITLE 11 OF THE EDUCATION ARTICLE.”

## EmPOWER:

- Page 25, line 14 - broaden empower to focus on GHG reduction as well as.
  - Amendment: On page 25, line 15, after “programs” add “**AND GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) ABATEMENT PROGRAMS**”. On line 16, after “savings” add “**AND EQUIVALENT GHG ABATEMENT.**”
- Page 25 line 36 - align dates for empower targets with SB528.
  - Amend to
    - 2.25% PER YEAR IN 2024 AND 2025;
    - 2.5% IN 2026;
    - 2.75% PER YEAR IN 2027 AND THEREAFTER.