

Committee: Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB708- Comprehensive Climate Solutions
Submitting: Dave Arndt
Position: Favorable with Amendments
Hearing Date: March 4, 2022

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

As a resident of Baltimore, MD, I am writing to express my strong support of HB708 with recommended amendments.

An important reason to support HB708 is that it leads with equity and involves black and brown communities, labor, and youth in achieving the goals of the legislation and having a role in the shaping of the implementation plans.

First, HB708 tasks the existing **Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities** to solicit input from all segments and communities in developing strategies to address the priorities of environmental justice communities, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and co-pollutants in the communities that have a disproportionate concentration of polluting industries and highways. The commission will also coordinate with vulnerable communities that are particularly challenged by storm surges, heat islands, lack of tree canopy and other effects attributable to climate change and to coordinate with and report to the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), from which the MDE will act on those recommendations.

Similarly, the bill establishes a **Just Transition and Retraining Work Group**, composed of representatives of labor, the NAACP, and formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as registered apprenticeship sponsors, representatives of the solar and wind industry to assist in a just transition.

Additionally, HB708 creates a **Climate Justice Corps** composed principally of young people to create career training opportunities in the new green economy, particularly for youth from disadvantaged communities.

I also support the other top line goals of the legislation:

- increasing the greenhouse gas reduction target from 40% to 60% by an interim target and developing a plan for net-zero by 2045;
- requiring monitoring and reporting of methane emissions, a more potent greenhouse gas, from landfills;
- establishing a Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub that will act as a clearinghouse for information, technical advice and financial incentives for the public and professionals (If you want to see how a similar program in D.C. works, watch here: [Retrofit Accelerator](#)). This HUB is designed in large part to support the provisions of a companion bill, HB831, being considered by the Environment & Transportation Committee that addresses greenhouse gas emissions by large commercial and multifamily buildings;
- requiring the Public Service Commission to establish a transition planning process for gas

- companies and electric companies;
- establishing goals for the percentage of state funding for greenhouse gas reduction measures to be used to benefit disproportionately affected communities; and
- Expanding programs under the EmPOWER program run by the utilities to:
 - increase the percentage of EmPower funding from 2% to 2.75% by 2028
 - Encourage replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems with heat pumps, giving priority to low income households; and
 - Encourage beneficial electrification (i.e., incentives for consumers to switch from gas to electric for purposes of reducing energy consumption, reducing consumer costs, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Recommended Amendments to Strengthen HB708

1. **Climate Catalytic Capital Fund** – add a Climate Catalytic Capital Fund (C3 Fund) in the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC) similar to the provisions in SB528 to provide funds for implementing climate solutions. The MCEC is Maryland’s Green Bank. Providing seed money for the C3 fund, would give the state the ability to leverage public investment with private capital. For every \$1 of public investment that fund is projected to generate \$4 to \$7 of private capital.
2. **Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub** – move the Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub from the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to the Maryland Clean Energy Center, given that MEA disagreed with recommendations in the Maryland Commission on Climate Change which could affect their implementation of the Hub.
3. **Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals** – change the initial target from 60% by 2032 to 60% by 2030 to align with SB528.
4. **Environmental Justice** - replace the term “disproportionately affected communities” with “overburdened communities,” and add a requirement that 40% of funding for greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures go to “overburdened communities.
5. **Climate Justice Corps** – strengthened the Climate Justice Corps by amending it to no provide good pay, health benefits, and career training similar to other civilian corps programs and to make it more consistent with SB528 as amended.
6. **EmPower** – broaden EmPower to also focus on GHG reduction and align the dates for enhanced EmPower targets with those in SB528.

For these reasons, I urge you to adopt our proposed amendments and vote favorably for HB708.

Thank you.

Dave Arndt

Retired Chemical Engineer and Climate, Environmental and Social Justice Advocate