



**Hearing Testimony February 15, 2022**  
**Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**  
**Service Employees International Union, Local 500, CtW, CLC**

**Senate Bill 135: Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act**

**SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

On behalf of the 20,000 working people in our region represented by SEIU Local 500, we offer our strong support for **Senate Bill 135**. Our union represents the support staff at the Montgomery County Public School system, Family Child Care Providers, Faculty at institutions of higher education, staff at non-profits, and many other working people across the region.

Greenhouse gas emissions are a primary contributor to climate change, and we are approaching a point of no return. We've seen it in the rising sea levels impacting Maryland's coastline, historic inland flooding, and our increasing daily temperatures.

The impacts of climate change are not limited to the weather and the land. For two decades we've known about the direct impact fossil fuel combustion and emissions has had on Maryland communities. In 2005, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health published findings that Black communities in Maryland were disproportionately exposed to pollutants and airborne toxins -increasing their likelihood for life-long, chronic illnesses. More recently, a nationwide study from Harvard in 2020 looked at a similar concern: the soot emanating from vehicle tailpipes and power plant smokestacks. Small differences in pollution levels means impacted communities are 15% more likely to die from COVID-19 than those from places where the level is just one microgram per cubic meter less.

SEIU supports this legislation because environmental justice is critical to ensuring our members and their families are protected in the communities where they live. In practice, SEIU Local 500 backs our working people to ensure environmental justice in the workplace. Chemical exposures, ventilation, heating, cooling, and Covid-19 risks are some of the challenges workers face today in America. Our frontline workers deserve to breathe clean air where they live. This legislation proposes critical changes that will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, hold the fossil fuel industry accountable, and includes important protections to ensure that polluters are held responsible and Marylanders are not left footing the bill.

SB 135 promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reinvest in the communities most harmed by fossil fuel pollution by combining public health protections with environmental justice projects to provide meaningful benefits to Marylanders statewide. For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 supports this legislation.