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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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SPONSOR TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0493
(DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE -
OFFICE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES -
ESTABLISHMENT)

Delegate Sheila Ruth
February 16, 2023

Climate change is no longer a distant future. It's here now and impacting all of us, including our small businesses. The General Assembly has and will continue to pass many bills, large and small, to mitigate the crisis by moving away from fossil fuels and to address its consequences, including flooding, extreme weather, and heat islands. Many local, state, and federal entities are also focusing on various aspects of the climate crisis. All of this important collaborative work creates both opportunities for businesses, such as financial assistance, and regulations that they must comply with.

Large businesses have the luxury of dedicated staff to keep track of both government regulations and programs. Small businesses often don't have the resources to know what regulations they need to comply with and that assistance is available to them, what it is, or how to receive it.

HB493 seeks to remedy this by creating an Office of Climate Change Assistance for Small Business to assist small businesses in navigating the climate crisis. It would help small businesses that need to transition to a clean energy model to find financial and technical assistance that might be available from federal, state, and local government, nonprofits, or the private sector. As just one example, small businesses wishing to install EV chargers may not know that there are various programs available to provide grants, rebates, or tax credits for their installation, or have the time and resources to research the varying requirements, deadlines, and amounts available.

The bill would also assist small businesses impacted by flooding, extreme heat, storm damage, and/or saltwater intrusion, which is impacting Eastern Shore agriculture.

HB493 does not create any new programs or financial assistance, but rather focuses on helping small businesses navigate the many already existing government programs and regulations.

As we navigate this crisis together, we need to make sure that small businesses are not left behind. I ask for a favorable report for HB493.