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## HOUSE BILL 1206

Date: March 5, 2020  
Committee: Economic Matters  
Bill Title: Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency – Investment in Disadvantaged Communities  
RE: Letter of Information

HB1206 proposes that the Maryland Department of the Environment, in consultation with the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities, identify and designate disadvantaged communities across the state in order to direct various sources of public funding in the direction of those neighborhoods.

The Department recognizes that this bill, if passed as written, would negatively affect MD Labor's Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) program because it would require that the funds within the Clean Energy Workforce Account be directed to specified localities outlined by the Commission instead of recipients who can demonstrate demand. (In 2019, the Clean Energy Jobs Act (SB516) established the Clean Energy Workforce Account within EARN Maryland. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2021, MD Labor will grant these funds to eligible applicants in order to support Registered Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship, and Youth Apprenticeship programming in permissible clean energy fields, such as solar and wind).

**EARN is successful because of its flexibility and HB1206 would add prescribed service areas that may not match labor market needs.** While many EARN partnerships currently operate in areas *likely* to be designated "disadvantaged communities," it is possible that some do not. Target, hard-to-serve population groups supported under EARN, such as veterans, dislocated workers, individuals with disabilities, and English language learners, may not live in/near economically or environmentally impacted areas, but they benefit from the offered occupational training.

Funds from the Clean Energy Workforce Account must utilize Registered Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship, or Youth Apprenticeship as the service delivery model. The added geographical component proposed by HB1206 could make identifying sponsors and program participants even more challenging. If passed, HB1206 would make it difficult for MD Labor to exhaust annual EARN appropriations.

EARN Maryland is the State's nationally-recognized workforce solution. It addresses local employment needs while providing mobility for the State's hardest-to-serve jobseekers, preparing them for careers in sustainable and lucrative pathways. The program accepts applications from various types of organizations, including but not limited to local workforce boards, Registered Apprenticeship sponsors, industry associations, nonprofit organizations, and local governments. All applicants must demonstrate a Strategic Industry Partnership that includes at least five businesses to ensure that prospective workers are training for in-demand occupations. Currently, EARN operates 71 partnerships across Maryland, spanning the State's five regional workforce areas (Capital, Central, Eastern Shore, Southern, and Western).