

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 926: Climate Solutions Act of 2020
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee | February 19, 2020

Signers

1199 SEIU - United Healthcare Workers East
CCAN Action Fund
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Environmental Justice Ministry
Central Maryland Beekeepers Association
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Climate Law & Policy Project
Climate X Change
Earth Forum of Howard County
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Howard County Climate Action
Howard County Indivisible
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition
MOM's Organic Market
National Wildlife Federation Mid-Atlantic Regional Center
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Safe Skies Maryland
Sunrise Movement Howard County
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Women Indivisible Strong Effective

Our organizations support Senate Bill 926, legislation to align our state law with the world's leading and most recent scientific recommendations on reducing greenhouse gases. We applaud Chairman Pinsky for sponsoring this bill to not only fix our state's draft climate plan, but immediately put in place climate pollution reduction measures and ensure an economically and racially equitable transition to a clean economy.

Many of our groups are part of the Maryland Climate Coalition, a network comprised of 30 organizations representing health workers, faith leaders, environmentalists, students, and communities of color. The Maryland Climate Coalition has chosen to make the Climate Solutions Act of 2020 a priority this legislative session because it aligns with our principles, namely to act upon the findings of the 2018 report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and to do so in a way that helps workers and invests in frontline and disadvantaged communities.

There is no denying that climate change is real, it is fueled by human actions, and that it is no longer some far off concept: it is here. We see it as far away as the Australian bushfires and as close as right here in Ellicott City floods. It comes in many devastating forms, from more frequent natural

disasters to the everyday drip-by-drip of air pollution, heat, and ocean acidification that are starting to constrain our economic, educational, public safety, and health viability.

Marylanders are not being spared. With more than 3,100 miles of tidal coastline, we have the second-most communities at risk of flooding due to sea-level rise in the nation. We're already losing islands in the Chesapeake Bay. Ocean City, at the heart of our state's tourism industry, has a 93% chance of a five foot flood in the next thirty years, putting 11,500 homes at risk. Growing acidification of our waters threaten crabs, oysters, and other seafood.

The entire state is at risk -- not just our coastal communities. Rising temperatures create more moisture in the air, making intense rainfall more common and therefore inland flash flooding more frequent. Maryland Department of Environment reports estimate that between 1980-2010, Maryland saw on average about 6 days above 95 degree heat. At our current rate, it is likely that Marylanders will see as many as 35 days of 95 degrees per year by 2050 and 86 days above 95 degrees per year by 2090. We have the sixth highest rate of premature deaths due to air pollution, with about 2,000 Marylanders dying prematurely every year. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, damages due to climate change in the Northeast region by 2050 can *conservatively* be estimated at about \$27 billion.

These impacts will grow exponentially if the climate reaches critical tipping points for feedback loops--climate consequences like ice loss and methane release that could rapidly accelerate warming--more likely to be triggered if global warming grows by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels. In 2018, the IPCC warned that global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced 50% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 to have any chance to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The IPCC provided ranges for these targets that suggest wealthier and more industrialized nations must do more: 60% reduction by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2045.

Maryland, one of the wealthiest states in one of the world's wealthiest nations, has emissions reduction requirements that fall well short of these scientific recommendations. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA), last updated in 2016 (more than two years before the latest IPCC report), requires a 40% reduction by 2030 based on 2006 levels with no firm target for net zero emissions. Since then, many states have passed stronger emissions reduction goals, with nine having more ambitious mid-range requirements. California and New York have both set net zero emissions targets for their entire economy by 2045 and 2050 respectively. The Climate Solutions Act adopts the IPCC's recommended emissions reduction targets of 60% by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2045.

The GGRA also required the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) to complete a climate action plan by the end of 2019 to detail how Maryland will meet its requirements. While that plan is behind the statutorily required schedule, there is a draft available for public feedback that has been presented before this Committee. It projects that Maryland will reduce emissions 44% by 2030 and about 65% by 2050. But it was clear from the Committee's January 16 briefing with Secretary Grumbles that the plan depends on many dubious assumptions calling into question the likelihood that the state will meet 40% emissions reductions without further legislatively mandated action.

The Climate Solutions Act requires MDE to adjust their draft plan to align with the new emissions reduction targets and utilize “best available scientific information” to ensure a more dependable projection of future climate pollution. Specifically, it prohibits MDE from claiming emissions reductions due to highway widening and requires a more accurate calculation of methane pollution.

The draft climate plan also lacks substance on two critical components of climate action: ensuring the equitable investment of climate change mitigation funding and providing a just transition for Maryland workers. The Climate Solutions Act would create two workgroups to make progress on both fronts: one on Climate Justice and one on Climate Jobs. The first will identify frontline and disadvantaged communities and assess whether these neighborhoods receive equitable investment. The second will bring labor leaders together with industry representatives and climate advocates to shape policies that transition workers in fossil fuel-based professions to a secure retirement or comparably compensated job, as well as create jobs associated with pollution reduction actions.

Of course, the days of mere goal setting and planning must be left behind. We have a decade left to take action. The Climate Solutions Act puts in place five modest measures to reduce emissions: (1) increasing our annual rate savings due to electricity efficiency gains from 2% to 3%; (2) electrifying half of the state’s bus fleet and 100% of the state’s light duty vehicle fleet by 2030; (3) requiring all new buildings that receive at least 25% of their funding from the state to meet LEED Zero Energy standards; (4) planting one million more trees per year over the next decade; and (5) constructing solar panels on all new buildings with at least 20,000 square feet of roof space. These actions will reduce just a small fraction of the emissions we must eliminate to reach our state goals, but they lead by example in each of the major economic sectors where we must make substantial progress over the next ten years. It’s a start.

We urge the Committee to give Senate Bill 926 a favorable report.