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COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

TESTIMONY ON: SB926 - Climate Solutions Act of 2020 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act

POSITION: SUPPORT

HEARING DATE: February 19, 2020

BILL CONTACT: Senator Paul G. Pinsky

To: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, and Committee Members

DoTheMostGood—Montgomery County (DTMG) is a progressive grassroots organization with more than 1600 members who live in a wide range of communities from Bethesda near the DC line north to Germantown and beyond, and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that provide a safe and healthy environment for our members. That is why DTMG supports SB926 which will align Maryland state law with the most recent scientific recommendations on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and return Maryland to a US and world leader in addressing climate change. SB926 will not only fix our state's flawed draft climate plan - - it will also immediately put in place climate pollution reduction measures and ensure an economically and racially equitable transition to a clean economy.

Climate change is already having negative effects in Maryland. With more than 3,100 miles of tidal coastline, Maryland has the second highest number of communities in the nation at risk of flooding due to sea-level rise. 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. Rising temperatures create more moisture in the air, making intense rainfall more common and inland flash flooding more frequent. Ellicott City in Howard County experienced two 1000-year floods within 22 months. From 1980-2010, Maryland saw on average about 6 days above 95 degrees. Due to climate change, Marylanders are likely to see as many as 35 95-degree days per year by 2050 and 86 days above 95 degrees per year by 2090. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, damage due to climate change in the Northeast region will cost about \$27 billion by 2050. Maryland also has the sixth highest rate in the US of premature deaths due to air pollution, with about 2,000 Marylanders dying prematurely every year.

In 2009, Maryland became one of the first states in the US to address climate change by passing the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA), requiring a 25 percent reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2020. That law was expanded in 2016 to require a 40 percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2030, with no firm target for net zero emissions. However, according to the most recent reports from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018,

we need to cut global GHG emissions in half or more by 2030 to prevent the worst climate devastation. The IPCC also suggested that wealthier and more industrialized nations must do more: 60% reduction by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2045. Maryland's current GGRA requirements are, therefore, no longer sufficient to meet what scientists agree is necessary for 2030 and beyond.

The GGRA also required the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) complete a climate action plan by the end of 2018 to detail how Maryland will meet its requirements. Although that plan is well behind the required schedule, a draft is available for public feedback and Secretary Grumbles presented it to the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee on January 16, 2020. The plan projects that Maryland will reduce emissions 44% by 2030 and about 65% by 2050. However, it was clear from Secretary Grumbles' briefing and from an independent analysis by the Center for Climate Strategies, a nonprofit organization, that helps states and nations develop climate action plans, that MDE's plan has several serious flaws and depends on a number of dubious assumptions. This makes it unlikely that the state will achieve 40% emissions reductions without further legislatively mandated action.

Many other states have much more ambitious emissions reduction targets than Maryland's and are moving forward with real action plans to meet those goals. Both California and New York have set 2045 and 2050, respectively, as deadlines by which their entire state economies will reach net zero emissions. Six other states have also set more ambitious medium-range emissions reduction targets than Maryland's outdated 2030 target: For example, North Carolina plans a 40 percent reduction by 2025 (five years before Maryland), Colorado 50 percent by 2030, Maine 51 percent by 2030, and Vermont 58 percent by 2028. In December 2017, Montgomery County, Maryland declared a Climate Emergency, with the goal of reducing GHG in the county by 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035.

To stay a climate leader, Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act must be updated to match current science. SB926, The Climate Solutions Act, adopts the IPCC's recommended emissions reduction targets of 60% by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2045. The Climate Solutions Act includes five specific 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) installing rooftop solar panels on all new buildings with at least 20,000 square feet of roof space. SB926 also requires MDE to adjust its draft plan to align with the new emissions reduction targets and utilize the "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 scientifically accurate calculation of methane pollution.

MDE's 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 addresses these shortcomings by creating two workgroups -- one on Climate Justice and one on Climate Jobs -- to make progress on both fronts. 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.

SB926 reflects current science for addressing climate change, sets ambitious but achievable multimodal targets for reducing GHG emissions, addresses climate equity and jobs, and sets Maryland on a sound path to a clean economy moving forward.

For all these reasons, DoTheMostGood strongly recommends a **Favorable** report on SB926.

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