



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Charles Glass, Deputy Secretary

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Vice Chair, Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 926 – Climate Solutions Act of 2020 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Nature Resources offers the following information on Senate Bill 926.

The department supports the bill's overall objective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is an urgent threat, and all levels of government and nongovernment organizations must take increasingly aggressive and balanced actions to reduce emissions and increase community resiliency. Maryland is a national leader in this area, realizing substantial reductions in emissions since the first Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act was passed in 2009, with the Hogan Administration taking bold new actions to achieve significant progress. While the department welcomes efforts to accelerate action to combat climate change, we would like to provide information and express some concerns with the bill as currently drafted.

The department's Maryland Forest Service oversees the planting trees through various forestry programs including those trees planted through the state forestry laws, landowner assistance programs, and tree planting incentive programs. The Maryland Forest Service also conserves a total of 5,155 acres of planted and existing forest under conservation easements through the state and local Forest Conservation Act programs.

Between 2006 and 2019, at least 18.7 million trees representing 41,466 acres were planted in Maryland. In 2018 alone, approximately 814,320 trees or 1,810 acres were planted. This figure is inclusive of the hard work of not only the Maryland Forest Service, but also that of the Maryland Department of Environment, State Highway Administration, and other conservation groups. However, the actual number of trees planted in the state is much higher as the department's data is not inclusive of those trees planted by homeowners or private entities that purchased trees at a local private nursery.

[OVER]

Contact: James W. McKitrick, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
Jamesw.mckitrick@maryland.gov ♦ 443-510-5013

Plantings completed under the department's stewardship program and landowner assistance programs have been documented to meet their targets to cumulatively reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 1.79 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2018. DNR's urban tree planting programs have also met the target, cumulatively reducing emissions by 0.02 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2018.

Given that Senate Bill 926 mandates the department to quite literally double its efforts, serious questions of practicality are raised. The state would need to invest an additional \$55 million each year to staff and supply the effort with a sufficient number of trees for planting. Moreover, ongoing experience in aggressive tree planting by the department has demonstrated a serious need to consider available land suitable for planting. All options to double the number of trees planted annually would require either the purchase of land or compensation for using land at a significant cost to the state not included in the \$55 million previously noted.

Thank you for allowing the Maryland Department of Natural Resource to provide this information regarding Senate Bill 926.

Respectfully submitted,
James W. McKittrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services