

Wednesday February 19, 2020

TO: Paul Pinsky, Chair of Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and Committee Members
FROM: Joshua Kurtz, The Nature Conservancy, Policy and Government Relations Director
POSITION: Support SB 926 – The Climate Solutions Act of 2020 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act

The Nature Conservancy supports SB 926 offered by Senator Pinsky. SB 926 increases the emissions reduction goals for Maryland to 60% by 2030 and sets the ambitious goal of a carbon-neutral economy by 2045. The bill also creates two new working groups, one on Climate Jobs and one on Climate Justice. The bill would also require changes to reporting by MDE and a requirement to use the best available science. The bill also sets specific sector wide goals to spur investment in solar energy, electrifying state vehicles, improving energy efficiency and planting 1 million trees over the next 10 years.

We want to highlight two components of this piece of legislation. The first is the creation of the two working groups. These working groups assure that impacted communities will have a say in how we move forward with building a more just and equitable future. The bill also takes in to account the need to transition workers from heavily fossil fuel dominated industries and provide opportunities for those workers to shape and lead on the move away from fossil fuels.

The Conservancy strong supports the inclusion of natural climate solutions within the goals of this bill. With the inclusion of the 1 million trees a year goal we can accelerate our rate of natural carbon sequestration across the state. Initial estimates show the planting of 1 million trees would sequester 274,465MtCO₂e over a ten-year period. If this program were run for 10 years, with planting 1 million trees a year we would see the sequestration of 7.3MMtCO₂e. These trees wouldn't only provide sequestration of carbon but the associated water quality and habitat benefits for the ecosystem. This model assumes the species planted are native and reflects roughly the existing mix of forest types in Maryland.

We commend Senator Pinsky on introducing this bill which would make great strides in reducing our emissions and helping the rest of the world limit our exposure to the negative impacts of climate change.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 926.