



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

February 26, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 896 – Environment – Statewide Green Business Certification Program – Establishment

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has reviewed House Bill 896, entitled Environment – Statewide Green Business Certification Program – Establishment and would like to offer a letter of support with amendments.

To encourage and support businesses and other organizations that have taken voluntary steps to reduce their environmental footprint, MDE established a free statewide program in 2009 called the Maryland Green Registry (www.green.maryland.gov). It includes about 565 member organizations that maintain online member profiles describing at least five environmental best practices and a measurable result related to at least one of those practices. It offers an annual Leadership Awards program for members that demonstrate significant results and a clear commitment to continual improvement and a Leadership Circle designation for prior award winners that continue to achieve significant new results. Each year, the program reports the annual results of the full membership and in 2019, members saved 434 million kWh of electricity, conserved 191 million pounds of water, reduced 9.2 million vehicle miles travelled, reduced 8.3 million pounds of waste and saved over \$104.6 million through a wide variety of sustainable practices.

Transparency is a hallmark of the program. The member profiles are maintained on a public-facing website and may be sorted by organization type and geographic area. If consumers wish, for example, to identify a printing company that has adopted green practices, they would use the search bar on the member table to bring up the list of printers and then review each company's environmental best practices as well as information about any independently-audited certifications they've earned along with their location, website and contact information. In addition, the Maryland Office of Tourism indicates in its VisitMaryland.org database which lodging, food services, and tourist attractions are Maryland Green Registry members and provides a link to their member profile.

The Maryland Green Registry is not a certification program; however, and does not require on-site verification. This was a deliberate decision when the program was created. There are a number of concerns as a regulatory agency in terms of MDE's ability to review non-regulatory matters at regulated facilities, enforcement of certification standards, and responding to fraudulent claims related to certification. In addition, a statewide certification program requiring on-site verification would require significant new funding, and/or a fee-based system and the use of independent auditors.

A number of credible, nationally and internationally recognized environmental certification programs are currently available and we encourage Maryland Green Registry members to participate in these programs and to include that information in their profile. These programs, which include B-Lab, ISO 14001, and USDA Organic among others are fee-based and include on-site verification and program support. Montgomery County's Green Business Program and Prince George's County Green Business Program both recognize businesses in their jurisdiction that are certified under these programs, an approach that eliminates many of the concerns listed above.

MDE supports amendments to HB 896 that provide the agency the flexibility to work with Montgomery County and other interested parties in developing a statewide program that recognizes organizations that have taken the extra step of seeking certification of their environmental practices through existing independent certification programs. This recognition level should be in addition to the Maryland Green Registry in order to continue to provide a free and inclusive program for organizations at all stages in their path toward sustainability.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor House Bill 896 during the Committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or by e-mail at tyler.abbott@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,



Tyler Abbott

cc: The Honorable Emily Shetty