

**Wednesday March 4, 2020**

**TO:** Kumar Barve, Chair of Environment and Transportation Committee; Dereck Davis, Chair of the Economic Matters Committee; and Committee Members

**FROM:** Joshua Kurtz, The Nature Conservancy, Policy and Government Relations Director

**POSITION:** Support HB 1425 – The Climate Solutions Act of 2020 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act

The Nature Conservancy (The Conservancy) supports HB 1425 offered by Delegate Stein. HB 1425 increases Maryland's emissions reduction goals to 60% by 2030 and sets the ambitious target of a carbon-neutral economy by 2045. The bill also creates two new and important working groups, one on Climate Jobs and one on Climate Justice. This legislation would require changes to MDE reporting and include a requirement to use the best available science. It sets specific sector-wide goals to spur investment in solar energy, electrifying state vehicles, improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of natural climate solutions through planting trees.

We want to highlight two components of this piece of legislation. Firstly, creating these two new working groups would assure that impacted communities will have a voice in considering how we move forward with building a more just and equitable future. In addition, the bill takes into account the need to transition employees from fossil fuel-dominated industries into new, forward-looking opportunities for those workers to shape take the lead on green jobs during the shift from fossil fuels.

The Conservancy strongly supports the inclusion of natural climate solutions within the goals of this bill. With the goal of 1 million trees a year, we can accelerate our rate of natural carbon sequestration across the state. Initial estimates show that planting 1 million trees would sequester 274,465 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) over a ten-year period. If this program were run for 10 years while planting 1 million trees annually, we could see 7.3 million MtCO<sub>2</sub>e sequestered. These trees would not only sequester CO<sub>2</sub>, but would also provide associated water quality, habitat and biodiversity benefits for the ecosystem. This model assumes that native species are planted and it reflects roughly the existing mix of forest types in Maryland.

We commend Delegate Stein on introducing this bill, which would make great strides in reducing our emissions and helping to limit our communities' exposure to the negative impacts of climate change.

**Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 1425.**