



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

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 1425 – Climate Solutions Act of 2020 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Nature Resources offers the following information on House Bill 1425.

The bill establishes a tree planting initiative that requires 500,000 new trees to be planted per year over the previous year's baseline and establishes a Work Group to develop the plan to achieve this goal as well as develop recommendations to reduce tree clearing during State highway construction. Included in the plan and recommendations are a number of unfunded analyzes such as an analysis of potential planting sites including the impact on agriculture as well as an analysis of trees scheduled to be cut down and the impact on carbon sequestration and a plan for reviewing future highway procurement to minimize tree clearing. The Work Group's report is due October 21, 2021 and sunsets June 30, 2022. 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.

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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 House Bill 1425 mandates the department double its efforts, serious questions of practicality are raised. The state would need to invest more than the initial \$1 million in 2021 and \$5.9 million for each year from 2022 through 2030 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 aggressively increase 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 fiscal note.

Thank you for allowing the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to provide this information regarding House Bill 1425.

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