



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

Testimony in favor of House Bill 1425

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the Environment and Transportation and Economic Matters Committees, on behalf of Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski and the Baltimore County government, I strongly urge you to give a favorable report on HB 1425.

Many parts of Baltimore County have experienced the consequences of climate change. There has been coastal flooding in Turner's Station, Essex and Middle River, riverine flooding in Catonsville, Oella and Towson, sunny day flooding in Miller's Island and Bowley's Quarters and threats to the public health due to air pollution. The models project an increase in sea level rise along our coastline, more severe weather events and higher temperatures. This will likely cause property damage and loss, reduced economic activity and increased health risks.

Baltimore County has begun developing our Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Climate Action Plan. We want better building standards, less energy consumption, a more electrified motor fleet and to mitigate our emissions and negative impacts of climate change. HB 1425 helps Baltimore County by setting targets for what we need to achieve. These new targets in HB 1425, and planned actions, are about the future. County Executive Olszewski recognized this by establishing a Youth Climate Initiative Working Group of more than 20 high school students to help drive our Climate Action Plan, providing not just the moral compass and equity lens but also with potential policies to help save the earth for their future.

HB 1425 is one of the most comprehensive and far reaching bills I have seen that attack greenhouse gases and integrates strategies to reduce emissions. It recognizes that the threat is now and that we are in a climate crisis. We must be more aggressive, reduce emissions and acknowledge that greenhouse gases have inequitable and negative impacts on communities of color and with low incomes, that the transportation and the energy sectors are major contributors and that there is a need to identify and develop jobs to support the fight against climate change. The state and private sector should be ready to invest capital in fostering businesses that will support these needed changes.

This bill furthers the County Executive's policy objectives to aggressively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and their harm, to promote jobs creation in the "green" sector and focus on equitable solutions to the problems of climate change. We believe that HB 1425 will compel more aggressive efforts to tackle climate change NOW, although it could potentially add a manageable burden to county operations.

HB 1425 is an important statement for Maryland. Baltimore County urges a favorable report.