

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1425-2020
Climate Solutions Act of 2020 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act

TO: Hon. Dana Stein, Chair of Environment Subcommittee, and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Andrew J. Miller

I am a voter in District 11, a professor in the Department of Geography & Environmental Systems at UMBC, a member of the Baltimore County Commission on Environmental Quality, past chair of the Water Resources subgroups of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change Scientific & Technical and Adaptation & Response Workgroups, and current chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee. I am writing as a private citizen to express my own opinions on HB1425.

I have been on the faculty at UMBC for 37 years and throughout that time I have taught about the science of climate change in my introductory-level classes while pursuing research on watershed science and on the causes and consequences of extreme floods. I have watched the steady accumulation of evidence about climate change and its consequences that began in the 1980's with speculation on possible trends, then later to affirmation of significant observed trends, to current flashing-red warnings that we are on the verge of or in the middle of a true emergency for the future of our children and grandchildren. Through the last decade my alarm has deepened as I watched the political demagoguery of climate denial in some of our public institutions, culminating in the destructive path adopted by the current Federal administration in Washington.

I keep up with the literature and literally every week I come across new refereed papers and news articles documenting the crossing of some new threshold or the rapidly increasing threat associated with some consequence of the ongoing episode of climate warming and the continuing increase in atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations. Maryland is particularly vulnerable owing to the accelerating rate of sea-level rise along our coastal plain and shorelines, the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, and other ecological impacts that could affect the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, forest health, agriculture, human health and economic well-being. It is time to take even stronger action.

I believe we are at a point where only bold and difficult measures have any chance of mitigating the most serious consequences. The only option now is for the states to take those bold moves and show the kind of leadership that is lacking in the executive branch of the federal government, in the hope that others will follow suit and a coalition of states can force the kinds of emissions reductions that are needed. Maryland should be among the national leaders on this issue. This bill adopts a more aggressive timetable for reaching net-zero carbon emissions than Maryland's current climate action plan. There may be objections in some quarters about the potential costs, but the cost of not acting will be much greater. I strongly endorse this approach and encourage this committee to reach a favorable vote on HB1425 and send it to the House floor without amendments that would weaken its effectiveness.