



Assateague Coastal Trust – PO Box 731, Berlin, MD 21811 – 410-629-1538

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB803– *Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act*

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the FUTURE Act. Assateague Coastal Trust supports HB803, the Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act of 2021.

We had the pleasure to meet members of this student led coalition, mentor them, and help to connect them with leaders of community groups in marginalized communities here on the Lower Eastern Shore as they conducted their research while drafting the bill. We are especially interested in seeing the language that a portion of carbon offset projects benefit Maryland and/or directly benefit environmental justice communities remain in this bill.

The Coastal Bays and Chesapeake Bay watersheds on the Lower Eastern Shore are already seeing the impacts of changes to our climate and rising sea levels, as our farm fields fallow from saltwater intrusion, wetlands are disappearing, and flooding events from stronger coastal storms are stressing wastewater and water treatment facilities as well as residential and commercial properties. Our most vulnerable communities on the Lower Shore are situated within flood zones and are the first to be impacted by increased flooding events. Warming ocean temperatures are causing our fisheries to move north, impacting our coastal commercial fishing industry. It is indeed time, now, to make the necessary changes in order to protect our coastal communities and economies. Inaction is not a choice.

Institutions of higher education have played a huge role in Maryland and around the world as beacons of research and societal progress. Public universities have a responsibility to protect, educate, and support citizens of the state and to lead their institution to support these principles. However, these public institutions have massive carbon footprints due to their high-tech research facilities, energy needs, and commuter emissions. Youth are utilizing their agency to remind public research institutions of their guiding principles. This legislation will ensure that universities will lead the way in carbon neutrality, secure co-benefits for the State, and address climate change while addressing climate justice.

This bill makes Maryland Public Universities leaders of sustainability and climate justice by:

- Reducing scope one and scope two carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 and scope three induced emissions by 2035
- Ensuring carbon offsets are of the highest standard
- Requiring that a portion of carbon offset projects benefit Maryland and/or directly benefit environmental justice communities
- Facilitating the sharing of best practices through establishing offices of sustainability at each institution.

We urge this committee to support this critical piece of legislation and vote favorably for HB803.

Thank you,

Kathy Phillips, Executive Director