



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 710

State and Local Government and Private Employers – Teleworking

Date: February 25, 2021
To: Senate Finance Committee

Position: Support
From: Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation **SUPPORTS** SB 710 which requires state and local governments to develop telework programs and policies for their employees and maximize the number of employees eligible for telework to the extent practicable.

An increase in telework will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that harm the Bay through nitrogen oxide deposition

This legislation's requirement that state and local government develop telework programs and maximize, to the extent practicable, the number of employees eligible for telework and supports greater adoption of telework throughout the State. The legislation also encourages private employers to develop policies that enable employees to work offsite and sets the intent of authorizing a tax credit to assist private employers offset costs for the development and implementation of telework policies.

An increase in telework will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Data from the Maryland Department of Environment shows that telework adoption could reduce greenhouse gases from between .57 and .79 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.¹ Nearly one-third of the nitrogen pollution in the Chesapeake Bay comes from air pollution (nitrogen oxide). As described by the Department of the Environment's overview of its Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan, "The plan's strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will also reduce Maryland's nitrogen oxide emissions, thereby advancing the State's efforts to restore the Bay."²

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions statewide helps confront climate change and the negative effects on the Chesapeake Bay, including severe weather, sea level rise, and warmer water temperatures

Increasing frequency and severity of storms due to climate change results in more soil erosion, sewer overflows, flooding, and polluted runoff. These activities dump nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment into rivers and the Bay. As a result, our waters experience more dead zones and algal blooms. Larger than average inflows of fresh water threaten oysters and push other Bay-life out of their traditional habitats.

As described by the Maryland Department of Environment, "slowing the rate of sea level rise can have a positive impact on the living resources of the Bay by reducing sediment loads and improving habitat quality."³ Climate change also leads to increased water temperature. Warmer waters have a decreased capacity to hold dissolved oxygen, exacerbating the Bay's fish-killing dead zones and contributing to algal blooms. Rising water temperatures are stressing fish from the Bay's iconic striped bass to Pennsylvania's

¹ Maryland Department of Environment, [Working Remotely to Reduce Pollution](#), presentation to the Maryland Commission on Climate Change Mitigation Work Group, July 14, 2020 at 5.

² Maryland Department of Environment, Climate Change Maryland, Chesapeake Bay restoration benefits (last visited Jan. 24, 2021)

³ Id.

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beloved brook trout. Temperature sensitive species are at risk, like eel grass, a food source for migratory waterfowl and important habitat for blue crabs. Significant changes in water temperature displace Bay species, impacting fishing.

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, public and private sector employers are activating continuity of operations plans, and many are providing telework options to protect the health of employees and the public. This bill takes a timely and reasonable step to acknowledge the potential long-term benefits of telework for our State and in a way that could help Maryland attain its greenhouse gas reduction goals and support the Chesapeake Bay's recovery.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 710.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Bay and its resources.