



GLEN ECHO HEIGHTS MOBILIZATION

Committee: House Appropriations Committee
Testimony on: (HB 630), Public School Construction – School Energy Use -Policy and Study (“School Clean Energy” bill)
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 17, 2021

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization submits this testimony in support of HB 630. We are deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change, and we want to support Montgomery County’s Climate Action Plan goals of 80% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2027 and 100% by 2035. To do so, we have focused our attention on one of the highest contributors to GHG emissions locally- Montgomery County Public Schools.

MCPS has an existing energy policy, most recently updated in 1997, but this policy currently lacks tangible goals and benchmarks for reducing GHG emissions, maximizing energy efficiency, promoting the use of clean energy, and protecting the health of students and employees.

To gain some perspective, we conducted a state-wide inventory of school district energy policies across the 24 counties in Maryland. In doing so, we learned that:

- **School districts are commonly the largest energy consumers in counties across Maryland** – larger than county governments. This means that they are also among the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions from the heating and cooling on their numerous buildings to the fossil fuels for the fleet of their school buses.
- **Most (but not all) school districts have energy policies, but these are often outdated.** Some date back to the 1970s, others to the early 2000s. Many such energy policies consist of a simple statement such as: “The Board of Education believes it to be our responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to conserve energy and natural resources while exercising sound financial management.” With one exception, the Baltimore City Schools Sustainability Plan, none of the school districts have targets for shifting to renewable energy sources or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Moreover, even in counties where the county government has adopted targets for renewable energy or greenhouse gas emissions reductions, the school districts are exempt from such targets.** Given that school districts own the properties for their school buildings autonomously from county governments, they are typically exempt from such county policies.