

Cimiya Duffin
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Written Testimony

Chairwoman McIntosh and the rest of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. My name is Cimiya Duffin. I am a third year psychology research major at Morgan State University, an urban research university in Baltimore, Maryland. Though I have settled in Charm city comfortably, I am a native of the lower middle class suburbs. I was raised in Montgomery County, Maryland and became a proud Marylander as I traveled around the state for soccer tournaments. Growing up, I was raised by my grandparents, my mom and my three siblings; two brothers and one sister. Seeing my dad every so often. My grandmother, a strong democrat, would force us to watch MSNBC and my older brother, a conservative independent, streamed videos from Fox on the same issues. During family dinners there were consistent conversations about politics that exposed me to different points of views. Those dinner tables moments inspired me to take action for the things I believe in and to always speak proudly about the communities I represent.

On campus, I am the president of my school's only active environmental organization, Geographical People's Society (GPS). Through GPS, I was able to get affiliated with MaryPIRG Student Climate Action Coalition (MSCAC) and have been serving as their Environmental Justice and Education Committee Leader for almost a year. I also serve as a very active ROTC cadet and a passionate member of the soccer club. I have been able to intern in the psychology department animal vivarium while also participating in a lot of student research studies to support my peers. Throughout the past couple of months, I have been receiving training on how to use the ArcGISUrban platform to collect data for my senior thesis project that focuses on community interaction and engagement with green spaces within urban African American communities.

The exposure to have a climate change defense plan is a privilege. Communities of color have been disproportionately affected by climate change and don't have the resources to defend themselves against its effects. Especially in a city like Baltimore. Baltimore is a city full of public universities that have a huge influence on the future demographics and development of the state of Maryland. Four out of six of those universities are represented here today, fighting for the FUTURE Act. I am here today alongside my colleagues to fight for the voice of students that come after me. The goal is to motivate a culture of green practices in communities that are not exposed to habits that can help them in more ways than one. The FUTURE Act makes it mandatory that students are a part of those conversations. That they are discussing how their school impacts the community through an environmental scope. This bill ensures that students gain the knowledge and skills they need to understand how their university could productively compensate for their carbon usage using carbon offset projects that specifically assist communities within a specific criteria.

Carbon neutrality doesn't take into account that sources of emissions which can have public health impacts are often located in marginalized communities. Our bill includes provisions to

address this issue and help to lessen the disparity in the form of local and environmental justice requirements for offsets. Local offset projects could be in the form of a community garden in a food desert, a tree planting program or being a part of upgrading local buses to hybrid fuel. Campuses have two options for obtaining offsets: they can purchase them from a vendor or create their own, verified through a peer review process. The method of creating a local offset project will be an opportunity to increase student outreach and education while benefiting community members consistently. Students will be given ample opportunity to actually pay attention to the lifestyles that surround their university. There's a false taboo myth that climate change can only be fought on the grass tops but there's real strength in the grassroots and the FUTURE Act is a great way to reveal that.

Over the past year, we (the students) have had to adapt to new ways of learning due to the pandemic. We have been able to take the tools that have been available to continue the journey of obtaining our degree on top of our daily responsibilities. We have proven to be resilient in times of adversity over and over again. As politicians and members of the previous generations, it is your duty to pass down the tools that benefit us while leaving a legacy behind for us to learn from. The time to start taking action is now or we will pay the price later.