



March 11, 2021

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Re: HB 1310 - Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency - Investment in Low-Income Communities

Letter of Information:

The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) is committed to doing our part to ensure that environmental laws and programs protect the environment as well as the health and well-being of all Marylanders. CEJSC has reviewed House Bill 1310 and provides this letter of information.

CEJSC is charged with examining EJ issues and sustainable community opportunities that may be associated with public health, safety, economy, government, or other issues relating to EJ and sustainable communities. CEJSC is broadly tasked with reviewing and analyzing Maryland laws and policies pertaining to EJ issues, including state agency programs and permits. CEJSC is also tasked with developing criteria to identify vulnerable communities and prioritizing action strategies toward the identified areas of the state that need immediate attention.

CEJSC is established in statute with the following authority:

- (1) Advise State government agencies on environmental justice and related community issues;
- (2) Review and analyze the impact of current State laws and policies on the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities;
- (3) Assess the adequacy of State and local government laws to address the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities;
- (4) Coordinate with the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council on recommendations related to environmental justice and sustainable communities;
- (5) Develop criteria to assess whether communities in the State may be experiencing environmental justice issues; and
- (6) Recommend options to the Governor for addressing issues, concerns, or problems related to environmental justice that surface after reviewing State laws and policies, including prioritizing areas of the State that need immediate attention.

House Bill 1310 would require CEJSC to develop by December 31, 2021, policies and recommendations to place the highest priorities on spending from specific special fund accounts that support clean energy and energy efficient programs projects and investments to benefit low-income communities. To achieve these priorities, the Commission is to consult with MDE, other state and local agencies, representatives of low-income communities, clean energy industries and related energy interests, environmental advocates and the general public. Conducting public

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

CAMILLE BURKE, CHAIR



information gathering sessions across Maryland to solicit input from low-income communities and the public is also an element of the consultation process. After public input and consultation, the Commission is to work with MDE, the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to develop specific recommendations for identifying and providing assistance to low-income communities, including recommended legislative and regulatory changes to achieve the priorities. The Commission is to review its recommendations yearly.

It is important that the legislature understand that the CEJSC is comprised of volunteer members who are appointed from the general public. It is staffed by two state employees who have the Commission as a part of their overall duties. CEJSC is concerned that adding detailed analyses and reports is beyond the scope of expertise afforded to the Commission. Any significant additional duties, as those in House Bill 1310 **must be designated with adequate funding, staffing and/or contracting assistance** so CEJSC can be responsive to any additional duties or responsibilities in a timely manner. Given the broad scope of the bill's requirement to prioritize policies and programs with regular review and to conduct multiple public meetings in a six month period, MDE would need two additional positions to implement the requirements of this bill. This would give the Commission better support and the capacity to fulfill the bill's requirements.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor these issues. Please feel free to contact me at 443-984-2460 or by e-mail at Camille.Burke@baltimorecity.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Camille Burke'.

Camille Burke, Chair of the CEJSC

cc: The Honorable Sandy Rosenberg, House of Delegates of Maryland
Ben Grumbles, Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment