

**STATEMENT OF LAWRENCE R. LIEBESMAN, ESQ**

**SB 0076, CLIMATE CRISIS AND EDUCATION ACT**

**SUPPORT**

**MARYLAND SENATE, BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE**

**HEARING on February 2, 2021**

My name is Larry Liebesman. I am submitting these comments in strong support of SB 0076, The Climate Crisis and Education Act ( SB 0076)

I have practiced environmental law for over 45 years having served at EPA and as a Senior Trial Attorney at the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division. I have been an adjunct professor of environmental law at GW Law School where I taught wildlife law focusing on the serious impact of climate change on species habitat. I also sit on the Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board ( ESB) focusing on the water resource and resiliency impacts of climate change. I have been monitoring the meetings of the Maryland Climate Change Commission charged with developing a plan to meet the mandate of the GHG Reduction Act, signed into law by Governor Hogan, to achieve a 40% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 from a 2006 baseline. **MARYLAND FACES SEVERE RISKS FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS REQUIRING URGENT ACTION NOW.** In my view there are two strong reasons that justify this important legislation.

**FIRST, THE BILL WILL SET MARYLAND ON PATH TO ACHIEVING NET ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2045**

The Bill will set statewide GHG reduction goals of 60 % by 2030 and 100% by 2045 consistent with the recommendation of the IPCC. **Economists agree that carbon pricing is the most efficient and cost-effective way to reduce GHG emission while incentivizing green energy. In fact, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stated at her recent confirmation hearing that “we cannot solve the climate crisis without effect carbon pricing.”** By putting an increasing fee on fossil fuels at point of entry in Md, the Bill's market-based approach, incentivizes the reduction in fossil fuel CO2 emissions It would put Maryland on a commonsense pathway to a sustainable vibrant economy. The Bill also provides a way to even exceed the current 40% CHG reduction goal in the GGRA and reach a 60% reduction by 2030. The Bill will complement programs such as Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and the Transportation Climate Initiative ( TCI).

**SECOND, THE BILL'S MARKET BASED SOLUTION WILL GENERATE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO HELP FUND CRITICAL PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE KIRWIN EDUCATION INITIATIVE AND PROVIDE AN EQUITABLE TRANSITION TO A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY**

The Bill establishes separate funds for education, green infrastructure and household and employee benefits. The fees on fossil fuels and on high polluting vehicles generated under the Bill will deliver:

- \$350 M /yr. to help fund the Kirwin Education Fund
- \$180 M in year one and more than \$500 M in year ten to fund infrastructure needs
- \$490 M in yr. one and more than \$850M in year ten to provide benefits to protect low -income households
- Protects consumers by prohibiting the fossil fuel companies from passing the fee on to consumers and by giving low and middle income consumers dividends from the revenue
- Provides dividends to protect Maryland energy intensive trade exposed industries and protects local jobs
- Invests hundreds of millions of dollars into clean, renewable energy

These funds will help communities' transition in a fair and equitable manner to a clean energy economy. Further, based on a January 14, 2020 opinion from the Office of Attorney General, there appears to be no legal impediment to the General Assembly "prohibiting carbon polluters from passing through costs of a carbon tax onto their customers." The Bill will also create an expert based Climate Crisis Council that will develop policy recommendations to achieve the pollution reduction goals of the Act, to fund education through the Kirwan Initiative and to ensure that low and moderate-income households and impacted employers are protected from financial harm.

I urge the Committee to favorably report this important legislation

Respectfully

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