

STATE OF MARYLAND

COMMISSIONERS

JASON M. STANEK
CHAIRMAN

MICHAEL T. RICHARD
ANTHONY J. O'DONNELL
ODOGWU OBI LINTON
MINDY L. HERMAN



PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

February 2, 2021

Chairman Dereck E. Davis
Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 231
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB 30 - INFORMATION –Public Utilities - Office of Climate Counsel Establishment
(Climate Counsel Act)**

Dear Chairman Davis and Committee Members:

The Maryland Public Service Commission has reviewed House Bill 30, which would establish an Office of Climate Counsel. The Climate Counsel would advocate for the environmental interests of the state and its residents, much like the Office of People's Counsel represents ratepayer interests in Commission proceedings. The Climate Counsel would be tasked with monitoring all Commission activities for potential climate change impacts. This legislation would recognize that the intersection of energy regulation and climate change is an important issue affecting the state, the nation, and the world.

Upon review of the bill, I would recommend two clarifying amendments. First, the legislation should clarify that the Office of Climate Counsel is independent of, and not housed in, the Commission (*see* lines 27 and 28 on page 11). This clarification is necessary to avoid potential conflicts of interest that may arise if the Climate Counsel is established within the Commission. Second, I recommend deleting lines 25-29 on page 14, which requires the Commission's staff to support the Office of Climate Counsel. This revision is similarly intended to avoid potential conflicts as the Climate Counsel would be its own independent agency and a party to Commission proceedings with the right to appeal Commission decisions, similar to the Office of People's Counsel.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide information on HB 30. Please contact the Commission's Director of Legislative Affairs, Lisa Smith, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason M. Stanek".

Jason M. Stanek
Chairman