

Caryl Henry Alexander
Artist, Resident of Clinton, MD
On behalf of Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
February 16, 2021

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
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Testimony on HB 66 –
HB 66: Coal Community Transition Act
Economic Matters Committee

Position: Favorable

Testimony in support of HB 66.

Over the past few months, I've worked with Interfaith Power & Light DMV to engage congregations of many faith traditions, all across our state, who are leaders in "Lighting the Way to a Coal Free Maryland."

I want to share with you an experience that I had while working with PG Parks as a teaching artist. I can tell you that the statistics that illustrate the inpatient rate for asthma in our county are not fake news or alternative facts. They are real.

I have worked with so many children and adults who in many ways suffer from the scourge of breathing polluted air. I remember in one situation, we were painting a mural on the front entrance of a community center, and my own inhaler dropped out of my apron pocket and almost every child said, "Oh, you have asthma... So do I." And there were suddenly six inhalers being held up by my students to show that they too are asthmatic and must carry a rescue inhaler with them at all times. In that moment I saw as plain as their beautiful faces smiling at me that our kids have a right to breathe clean air!

My life's work as an artist is inspired by my love of Great Spirit, appreciation and respect for nature and taking creative action in support of protecting the earth. In this artwork, which you can see in my written testimony, I illustrate the darkness which we stand under—the scourge of fossil fuel emissions in Maryland. The people pictured are our families, neighbors, fellow congregants, they are facing the light, standing together, rising up, in defense of their wellbeing and the wellbeing earth.

People of faith took pictures with the artwork in December with their Advent candles, Hanukkah candles, solstice lights, and more. **Take a second to look through the pictures below**, and join our faith communities in imagining the possibilities that a coal free Maryland and most especially a just transition, will offer for our health, our climate, and our shared Creation.

In the past year, we've seen five coal plants close or announce plans to close. Our focus now must be to ensure a just transition for the communities that surround these power plants. "Just Transition is a principle, a process and a practice." This is a time for all hands on deck with the purpose of shifting from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy.

We must care for both our neighbor who has asthma and our neighbor who worked at the coal plants. They are the people who have been disproportionately exposed to and negatively impacted by hazardous pollution and industrial practices. This is why you, our representatives, must pass this legislation and provide support for the workers and their communities. This transition must be bottom up, centering the voices of those most impacted to understand what is needed on a grassroots level to sustain them and their families into the future.

Faithful Marylanders know that a clean energy economy is our future, and our communities are depending on our elected officials to chart the path forward.



Caryl Henry Alexander of Clinton, MD poses with her artwork.



At left, Kori Majeed of Masjid Muhammad in front of her solar powered home in Cheverly, MD

At right, Merikay Smith of the Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter Day Saints Kensington Ward, at her home in Germantown, MD, with her home grown Christmas tree



At right, the Wicomico Interfaith Partners for Creation Stewardship show their love for a coal free Maryland.



Jakir Manela, Chief Executive Officer of the Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, MD, and Nets Manela with their children



Joan Plisko, Community Sustainability Director of the Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, MD, and attendee of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, with her menorah

Joelle Novey, Director of IPL-DMV, and Caryl Henry Alexander of Clinton, MD



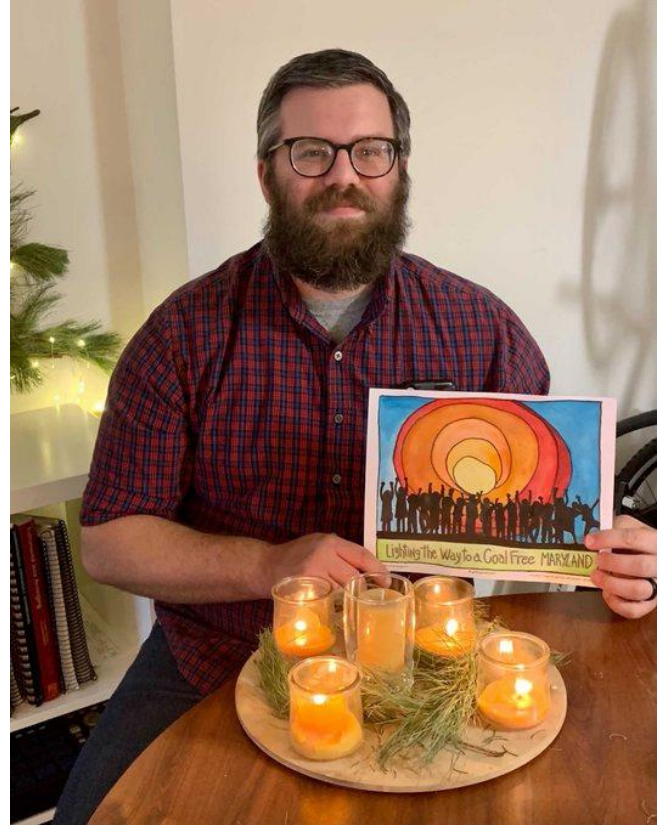


At left, Evonne Marzouk of Kemp Mill Synagogue in Silver Spring, MD



At right, a young supporter in St. Mary's County, MD lighting the way to a coal free Maryland

At right, Dustin Long of Sliver Spring United Methodist Church with his Advent wreath



At left, Sherie Koob of Middletown United Methodist Church with her Christmas tree



Deacon Laura Heller, leader of the Del-Md Synod ELCA Creation Care Team, and Lutheran lay leaders from across the state are lighting the way to a coal free Maryland





Elie, age 6, decorates his "Lighting the Way" artwork and poses with his menorah in Silver Spring, MD



Maryland members of the 8th Day Faith Community hold up Advent candles in lighting the way to a coal free Maryland

Volunteers with Avodah, the Jewish service corps, lighting the way to a coal free Maryland





Andrew Gohn of Tikkun Leil Shabbat in Silver Spring, MD and his daughter pose with their menorah



Laura File Long of Sliver Spring United Methodist Church with her Christmas tree



Mike Koob of Middletown United Methodist Church with his Christmas tree



Members of the Jewish Climate Action Network DMV are lighting the way to a coal free Maryland. In this photo, they lift up plants in celebration of Tu BiShvat, the new year of the trees.

At right, Jonathan Lacock-Nisly of Baltimore with his Christmas tree





At left, attendees of Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase show their support for a coal free Maryland

At right, Brooke Lacock-Nisly of Baltimore with her Christmas tree



People of faith from all across the state gathered online in January to learn and take action for a coal free Maryland

Last year, Maryland faith communities delivered the message that six coal fired power plants were six too many, posing with signs to show support for the previous iteration of the Coal Community Transition Act.

Below, you can see those pictures from early 2020 offered in support of last year's bill.

The pandemic ended the General Assembly before action could be taken on that legislation, but in the time since, one of those plants has closed and another four have announced plans to do so. As people of faith, we care for both our neighbors with asthma, exacerbated by coal pollution, and our neighbors who work at the coal plants. These workers and their communities cannot be left to the whims of the market.

For all of our neighbors, we urge the committee to give HB 66 a favorable report.

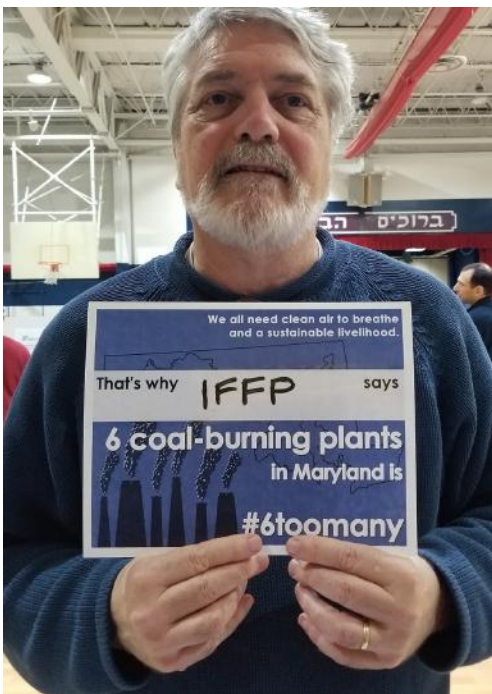
Jonathan Lacock-Nisly
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
In support of HB 1545
March 5, 2020

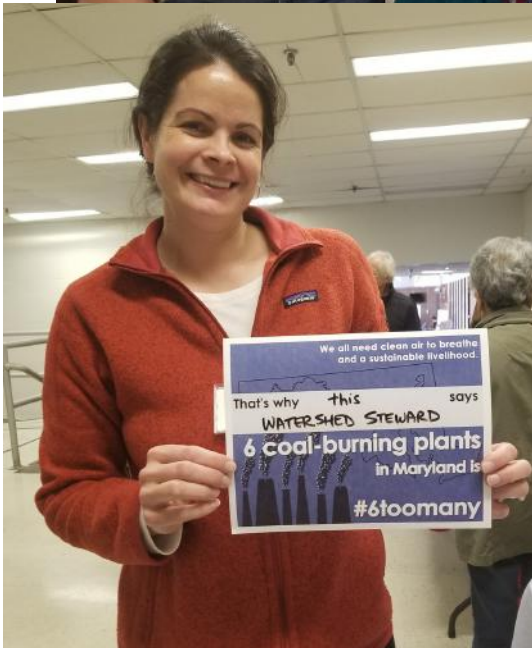


Maryland's Faith Communities Speak Out for a COAL COMMUNITY TRANSITION

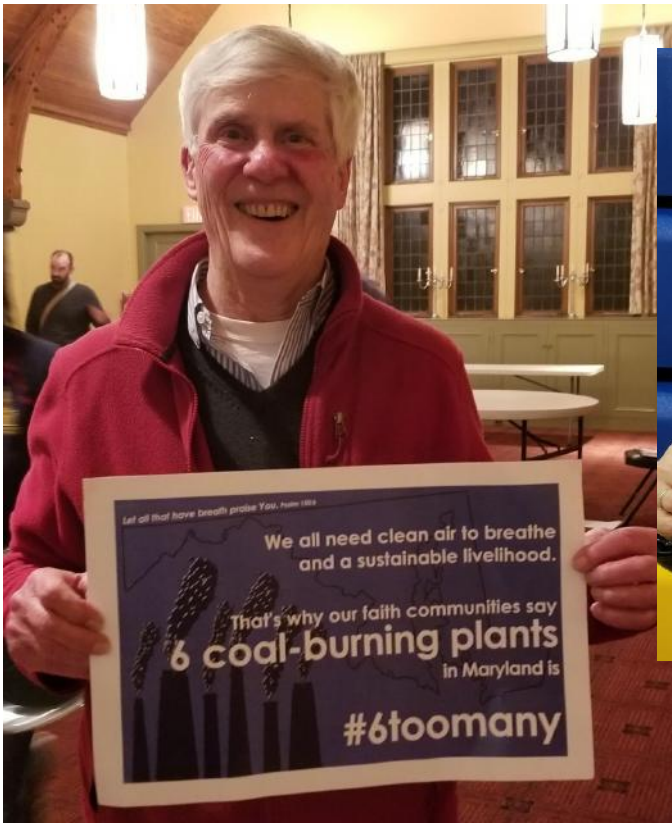


Communities of many faiths across the state, from Rockville to Annapolis and Frederick to Towson, including Bishop Eugene Sutton and members of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland (above), support a just transition off of coal.









#6toomany



