



Voices Maryland

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB0033-- Climate Crisis and Education Act

SPONSOR: Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo

Organization: Voices Maryland, Rebuild Maryland Coalition

Person Submitting: Sarahia Benn, Legislative Executive

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 18, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in support of HB0033. Voices Maryland is a grassroots organization focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impacts marginalized communities and veterans affairs. Environmental legislation is of massive importance to these communities particularly due to how impacted these communities have been historically and currently.

Why is CCEA IMPORTANT?:

- Establishes three separate funds for green infrastructure: a. The climate crisis infrastructure fund; b. The household & employer benefit fund; c. the kirwan commission fund
- Provides dividends to protect Maryland energy intensive trade exposed industries and protect local jobs
- Incentivizes renewable energy which tends to be locally produced
- A job creating bill
- Encourages economic vitality
- Huge investments in public goods
- Puts \$350 million into public education every year

Environmental Justice Past & Future in MD: “Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Official definition at the EPA Environmental Justice website.

In the 1960’s during the Civil Rights Movement a massive alarm was sounded in regards to the environmental dangers on public health issues in Black and Marginalized communities nationwide. Housed in many of these communities were Black and Marginalized Veterans who had come home from war to deal with an environmental war. Fast forward to 2021 and too many Black and Marginalized communities in our Nation and in Maryland are still being environmentally oppressed by multiple environmental injustices such as:

- Water contamination
- Food contamination
- Environmental Asthma, lung cancer, tumors
- Power Plants, Incinerators, Lead poisoning, emit mercury, arsenic, etc.
- Many of these energy facilities emit carbon dioxide & methane as the #1 & #2 causes to driving climate change

Race, then class, in most cases is the number one indicator for the placement of toxic facilities in our Country and in Maryland. There is no denying that Black, Marginalized, and low income communities are often the hardest hit by climate change and usually the communities least likely to ever be repaired or receive resources to rebuild infrastructure which is why the Climate Crisis and Education Act has many good attributes in it to address some of the many issues long ignored.

In communities, Maryland wide, we are not too late to be able to address the climate crisis if we act now. Our State has not reached a point of no return on runaway carbon emissions if we act now. However there are some things we must do. We must stop burning fossil fuels. We must act now!

In my assessment, this bill does a lot to address the climate crisis by connecting economic resources to vulnerable communities while addressing the negative impacts of the environment. We have Veteran communities housed within the Black and Marginalized communities which means their environmental needs will finally receive the help they have needed to protect them from the climate crisis. In addition, this bill has a rebate

system built in to ensure that low income and vulnerable residents will not suffer any negative financial impacts. Adding that this bill sets a new statewide greenhouse gas-emission reduction goal of 60% by 2030 and net zero by 2045. This will have a direct positive impact on vulnerable communities in Maryland on a statewide level.

For these reasons, I urge a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB0033.

AMENDMENT for HB0033

5-2-1217 THERE IS A CLIMATE CRISIS COUNCIL

The Nomination process must require public discussion and input from community organizations, coalitions, and constituents statewide. Sub-nominations by the Black Caucus, Latino Caucus, Asian Caucus, and Women’s Caucus can also be made and presided by the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House in selection of experts in the field of economics, environmental science, environmental justice, and others as needed.

The period of time for this inquiry should last at least one month between nomination and being added to the Climate Crisis Council.

Respectfully submitted,



Sarahia Benn

(Voices Maryland, Rebuild Maryland Coalition)

Sarahiabenn@gmail.com

(Dedicated to Black History month)

“We can be joyful while we’re trying to change the world. As long we’re also aware that you can’t get away with things just by doing the easy stuff. You actually have to challenge certain things and put yourself in uncomfortable positions, often risking things in order to achieve real change.”

[Karen Washington, Community Gardener, The Bronx, NY](#)