



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 66

DATE: February 16, 2021

SPONSOR: Delegates Brooks and Barve

ASSIGNED TO: Economic Matters

CONTACT PERSON: Amy Samman (amy.samman@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support With Amendment (Department of Environmental Protection)

Electric Generation – Transition From Fossil Fuels – Carbon Dioxide Emissions Rate and Transition Plan and Fund (Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021)

House Bill 66 establishes a cap on carbon dioxide emissions for the existing electric generating stations in the State that burn coal. The bill also establishes a Fossil Fuel Community Transition Fund and Advisory Council to provide grants for individuals and communities affected by the transition from fossil fuels and the retirement of electric generating units.

Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP) supports House Bill 66 with an amendment. In 2017, the Montgomery County Council declared a climate emergency calling on all levels of government to “initiate a massive global mobilization to restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy” and “transform the climate by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2027 and reaching 100% elimination by 2035, and initiate large-scale efforts to remove excess carbon from the atmosphere.” Coal-fired power plants generate a significant amount of the total greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity sector in Maryland. This bill will assist the County and State in achieving its target of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions entirely.

Last year, GenOn initiated the deactivation and closure process of its three coal-fired units in Dickerson, Maryland. The bill provides that anyone who was “terminated from employment or whose contract was terminated, due to the permanent retirement of an electric generating unit that resulted in the displacement of at least 20 workers” on or after May 15, 2020 would be eligible to seek support from the Fossil Fuel Community Transition Fund. This will allow many of the employees impacted by the closure of the Dickerson units to access employment transition programs established by the Fund.

As drafted, the bill requires the owners of electric generating units that are currently operating to report to the Advisory Council about the employee layoffs on an annual basis. MCDEP recommends an amendment to require owners of “electric generating units that were permanently retired on or after May 15, 2020” to also provide this information. This would ensure the employee data for the Dickerson unit employees is also reported to the Advisory Council. The suggested amendment language is below.

For the foregoing reasons, Montgomery County respectfully requests a favorable with amendment Committee report on House Bill 66.

Page 10, Line 23 after “UNIT” insert:

“OR AN ELECTRIC GENERATING UNIT PERMANENTLY RETIRED ON OR AFTER MAY 15, 2020”