

HB 630 Primary and Secondary Education—School District Energy Use – Policy and Study

Submitted to: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

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Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

Environmental benefits: I hardly need to remind you that we face an existential threat to the planet with rising temperatures and all that brings with it. Here on the Eastern Shore we are the third most impacted area of the country for sea level rise resulting from the heating of the planet, augmented by land subsidence. In Salisbury we regularly see “sunny day flooding” on streets, resulting from sea level rise. Increasingly, once bountiful farms and forests of Somerset and Dorchester counties become permanently unproductive because of saltwater pouring up ditches originally dug to drain the areas. Now the higher water levels bring saltwater up those ditches into once productive fields and forests. The Romans once spread salt on the lands of people they conquered to destroy their food supplies and livelihoods. In our case, our choice of fossil fuels is bringing the killing salt, resulting in the destruction of fertile land once producing food and timber, both important industries on the Shore.

Educational benefits: Schools are crucial for helping form the attitudes of our children and their parents. In this case schools will be demonstrating by example that we can indeed act to counter the threat.

Financial benefits: I have spoken with school officials in Wicomico County, and they perceive no problems or unusual costs to implement the proposed law. Indeed they already are using some practices beyond those called for in the Bill. A few years ago they placed solar panels on school properties and significantly cut costs. Wicomico already tracks the data required by HB 630 using a *free EPA App*, “Portfolio Manager.” The BOE uses the tracked data to guide its energy use, prioritize and address the most cost saving areas, and as a result can document saving hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. The savings more than pay for the monitoring.

Thus, HB 630 addresses environmental issues but can also bring major financial benefits associated with running large facilities that school districts must manage.

Members of the Wicomico Environmental Trust urge you to approve this Bill which offers a modest move forward to ensure that our children and future generations will live in a healthy and sustainable landscape.

Thank you.