

My name is Dan Alpert and I am the Student Body President at the University of Maryland, College Park. I'd like to start by thanking Chair Pinsky and all the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this bill, as well as Senator Rosapepe for introducing the legislation, which will create a more environmentally friendly and just society for all Marylanders.

At the University of Maryland (UMD), I have helped create and lead grassroots efforts to accelerate our university's carbon neutrality goals, place more compost bins across campus, and celebrate the natural beauty of our shared community. These efforts have been fostered by our university's strong commitments to climate action. In fact, the university has reduced its carbon footprint by over 50% compared to 2005<sup>1</sup> levels and has committed to being carbon neutral by 2050, if not sooner. In addition, UMD's Office of Sustainability has led the charge in finding solutions to reduce the university's impact while funding hundreds of thousands of dollars in sustainability projects for students, faculty, and staff.

The climate crisis is no secret. Sea levels are rising and temperatures are warming. While it was 50 degrees during February here in Maryland last week, it snowed in Texas and was sub-zero for multiple days across the Midwest. Climate change is not an issue that we can tackle in five or ten or twenty years. We have to start now by taking action at the highest levels.

This bill will institute a goal that all University System of Maryland (USM) schools achieve carbon neutrality by 2035, a goal that will be accomplished by verified carbon offsets. This means for every ton of CO<sub>2</sub> a school produces, they will support a project that removes or sequesters an equivalent amount of carbon. This might take the form of wind energy projects in the western panhandle, or by conserving wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay. Further, the bill stipulates that a portion of these offsets must go towards environmental justice initiatives to protect Maryland communities that are already being marginalized due to the climate crisis. This bill will show the state's dedication to being a leader in the fight against climate change while protecting many areas that are already feeling its detrimental effects.

This bill will also require that all USM schools create an Office of Sustainability by 2023. This office will provide sustainability education tutorials for all students, organize and facilitate eco-friendly activities, and be a resource of sustainability information specific to each institution. Our university is a leader in this front, and I see this bill as an opportunity for all USM students to partake in environmental action within their community. Likewise, this bill will provide the experiences those students need to create environmentally-minded citizens and ensure we take sustainable actions no matter the industry we enter.

We are all aware that we need to cut our emissions in order to prevent further damage. Given the immediate action that needs to be taken to protect our environment, the Student Government Association at the University of Maryland, urges you to give a favorable report for the FUTURE act.

Sincerely,  
Dan Alpert, *Student Body President*  
Kurt Willson, *Director of Sustainability*  
Ben Baitman, *Director of Government Affairs*

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<sup>1</sup> UMD Sustainability Progress Data. (2021, January). Retrieved February 23, 2021, from <https://sustainingprogress.umd.edu/measuring-progress>