



Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act

SB 835 – March 9, 2021 – Education, Health, Environmental Affairs Committee

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Thank you Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Health, Environmental Affairs Committee to allow me to provide this testimony on behalf of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

Since its founding in 1925, UMCES has been engaged in science to management programs to meet its legislatively mandated mission to “...develop and apply a predictive ecology for Maryland and her citizens.” Our work spans numerous topics largely related to the Chesapeake Bay restoration, its watershed and species therein, from the mountains of Western Maryland to the Atlantic Ocean.

Unfortunately, global emissions of greenhouse gasses are increasing as are global temperatures. In fact, this past decade is the warmest on record. These projections are going in the wrong direction. Maryland is one of the most impacted states from climate change along with Louisiana and Florida. Maryland has made progress toward meeting its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, yet more aggressive goals than the Paris Agreement will be needed to significantly reduce (or simply slow down) the impact of a hotter Maryland with warming and rising seas, and more impactful storms.

We are pleased that the Sponsor has worked so closely with students from across the University System of Maryland, including those from UMCES, in drafting this bill. We recognize that the climate change challenges over the next few decades will be great and will have an enormous impact on their economy and quality of life as it will for generations to come – even as practices to reduce emissions are incorporated.

On UMCES campuses, as well as many campuses across the USM, we have taken multiple steps toward energy efficiency and renewable energy sources all toward reducing emissions. For example, at UMCES Horn Point Laboratory in Cambridge we flipped the switch in 2018 on a 10 acre solar field in addition to a 46 spot parking canopy – with 4 charging stations for electric vehicles. These solar fields alone cover 50% of our energy needs on that campus. We’ve also installed multiple geothermal heat pumps, where and when feasible. UMCES has been committed to upgrading aging infrastructure to newer, more energy-efficient alternatives, and building all new campus buildings to at least the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver standard or equivalent.

We support the goals of this bill toward carbon neutrality and applaud the students and sponsor for challenging us to react faster. However, our concerns are related to if and how the costs of becoming carbon neutral will be covered without additional State investment. Such costs include: 1) new facilities with potentially higher standard costs; 2) facilities renewal projects with higher standard costs; and 3)

the true costs of carbon credits, particularly those from within the region which we agree would be preferred due to their added benefits.

If the entire State capital program is not brought into this bill, we ask that more time be given to achieve these important goals, in-line with other State carbon reduction planning efforts. With additional resources where necessary, UMCES would be willing to serve as a pilot institution toward achieving aspects of carbon neutrality so the rest of the USM and the entire State can learn from our carbon reduction planning and implementation efforts.

UMCES looks forward to continue working with the Sponsor and Committee and offers its Support with Amendments to SB835.