



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland has voted to offer **favorable** support for HB 583-Climate Solutions Now Act. This legislation seeks to put Maryland on track to have net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, and ensure we achieve that goal by investing in disadvantaged communities.

This bill requires the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to determine how to define an overburdened community, and then the Commission will decide on a percentage of all state funds spent to address the climate crisis that must go to overburdened communities. This provision is based on the New York Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act which requires the state to invest 40% of all funds spent to address climate change in environmental justice communities. This is widely considered the gold standard of Environmental Justice policies at the state level.

In addition to the overarching commitment to equity in climate spending, this legislation will plant 500,000 trees in communities that are urban and historically redlined or economically disadvantaged communities. The plantings will be done through a grant program where community members will be the lead on tree planting projects. Tree cover in an urban area improves property values for the surrounding homes. As the climate crisis unfolds, heatwaves are becoming increasingly deadly. These heatwaves are most severe in urban neighborhoods without trees. By empowering communities to plant trees in historically redlined neighborhoods, this bill will build wealth in majority black areas and help protect those areas from ever worsening heat waves. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports HB 583.

Respectfully,

Darryl Barnes

Darryl Barnes
Chair, Legislative Black Caucus
of Maryland

Melissa Wells

Melissa Wells
1st Vice Chair, Legislative Black
Caucus of Maryland