**Olivia Bartlett, Co-Lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team**

**Committee**: Environment and Transportation

**Testimony on**:  HB0583 – Climate Solutions Now Act

**Position:  Favorable**

**Hearing Date**:  February 11, 2021

**Bill Contact:**  Delegate Dana Stein

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney.  DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment and that address equity for all residents in our communities.  DTMG strongly supports HB0583 because it is a comprehensive approach to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that drive climate change, to move Maryland towards a renewable energy future with good green jobs, and to bring Maryland's plans for addressing the existential threat of climate change into line with the scientific recommendations of the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Climate change is already here.  Maryland already has nuisance flooding, high heat days, and storm surges on a regular basis.  International experts have urged action on climate with increasing urgency in recent years for good reason:  the consequences of not acting now will be very dangerous for our children and grandchildren.

In addition, a recent Harvard study found that a small increase in air pollutants from fossil fuel combustion causes a significant increase in the likelihood that someone will die from COVID-19.  As Maryland recovers from the coronavirus and its associated recession, passage of HB0583 will both stimulate our economy and improve our air quality.

HB0583 will update Maryland's GHG goals to 60% reduction by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2045, and mandate that MDE cannot use highway widening or unproven carbon capture and storage technologies when planning how to achieve these goals. This will bring Maryland into line with the most recent IGPCC recommendations.  HB0583 also requires the state to take several other immediate steps to reduce emissions, including planting 5 million native trees by 2030, increasing the incentive for farmers who enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, transitioning state light vehicle and bus fleets to zero-emission vehicles, requiring new commercial buildings and schools to be net neutral or solar ready, and mandating increases in energy efficiency in commercial and residential buildings.  HB0583 will require MDE to calculate the social cost of carbon emissions, which is a big step toward understanding the real and total costs of GHG emissions, and also requires better monitoring of methane leakage from landfills.

Many studies have shown that low-income and minority communities disproportionately bear the consequences of air pollution and climate change.  HB0583 addresses this problem with strong equity and environmental justice components that will:

- Require the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to identify communities disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis.
- Restructure Maryland's approach to climate justice by mandating that a percentage of all future climate spending go to disproportionately affected communities.
- Ensure that labor voices are represented in the planning process, and that jobs benefit those who need them most.
- Exempt from personal property tax community solar projects on rooftops, parking lots, or brownfields that primarily benefit low-income households.
- Require that 10% of the 5 million trees to be planted are in urban areas that have been historically redlined or are economically disadvantaged.
- Create a grant program through the Chesapeake Bay Trust to fund community groups planting trees in underserved urban areas.

Importantly, HB0583 establishes adequate and sound funding mechanisms for the proposed programs.  Up to $20 million of funds in excess of $50 million in Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) will be spent to implement the proposed programs.  HB0583 does not propose to take away from any of the existing SEIF funding percentages; only funds that are above and beyond the usual annual budget for SEIF will be used for these programs.  In addition, every year between 2022 and 2030, $15 million from the Bay Restoration Fund will be used to enhance existing Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture programs and create a new Urban Tree Planting program.  As one of the most cost-effective practices to reduce water pollution, tree plantings are a worthy application of Bay Restoration Funds remaining following the State's completion of upgrades at major wastewater treatment plants.

In summary, HB0583 is a comprehensive approach that will create jobs, save lives, and reduce our contribution to the climate crisis in ways that address equity and environmental justice.  Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0583 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Bartlett
Co-lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team
oliviabartlett@verizon.net
240-751-5599