

Testimony of Elly Cowan

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Before the
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 11, 2021

Pertaining To: HB583, Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021

Support

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of smart growth and preservation in Maryland. Through our Smart Growth Maryland program, Preservation Maryland advocates for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns.

SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 583

Preservation Maryland supports HB583, Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021. This omnibus bill seeks to address the climate change crisis and environmental justice issues that face our state. The legislation will increase Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction requirements to 60% below 2006 levels by 2030 and net neutral by 2045. The bill would also task the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to determine what percentage of all state funds invested in climate change must go to overburdened communities. The bill creates a work group comprised of IBEW, AFL-CIO, registered apprenticeships, construction laborers, and building tradespeople to make recommendations for workforce development and training for displaced fossil fuel workers. Finally, the bill will enact simple, effective policies to reduce and mitigate emissions including planting 5 million trees by 2030, with 10% to be planted in underserved urban areas of the state.

We are in the midst of a climate change emergency, with the urgency of the crisis growing every year. The opportunity to take the necessary aggressive actions to effectively mitigate the worst effects is dwindling. Maryland's more than 3,000

miles of shoreline and more than 265,000 acres of low-lying land make our state one of the most vulnerable to sea level rise and the effects of increasingly violent weather events, and we are already seeing the devastating effects all across our state. Additionally, this legislation is grounded in the understanding that climate justice is environmental justice, with climate change disproportionately impacting the health, environment, and income of many low-wealth communities and communities of color.

Maryland has an opportunity to demonstrate real leadership in climate policy and show the rest of the country what is possible. The Climate Solutions Now Act puts us on this path. Therefore, I respectfully urge a favorable report of HB583.

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