

TO:

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice-Chair
and the members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, Maryland 21411

FROM:

Coalition of Maryland Grassroots, Climate, and Labor organizations

SUBJECT: 2021 Consideration of Climate and Labor (HB0298 / SB0083) Organizational Sign-on Letter

January 22, 2021

Dear Maryland General Assembly:

We, the undersigned groups, urge you to support legislation to require the Public Service Commission (PSC) to implement a climate and labor "test" during its decision-making processes (HB0298 / SB0083).

The world's leading climate scientists warn that we have 10 short years to dramatically reduce our climate-disrupting emissions. This means we need to consider climate when making decisions about how we power our homes, industries, and cars, and keep labor standards and equity front and center while we build this new economy. We need a Public Service Commission that is able to fully consider these proposals' climate change and labor impacts.

Maryland has committed, legislatively, to specific targets for reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. Maryland's electricity-generating coal and gas plants are the State's second highest emitter of greenhouse gases and the State oversees the electricity sector and approves all new power plants through the PSC, a unit within the Executive Branch of State government.

Notwithstanding Maryland's climate commitments and the significant role that the State's electricity generation plays in heating the climate, the PSC does not consider climate in its decision-making processes for guiding the State's electricity future. This was confirmed by the PSC staff in 2019 when the PSC approved the repowering of the retired coal-fired CP Crane facility in Baltimore to gas. The PSC staff advised that "the Commission has never required that any consideration of climate change and its effects be included in a Proposed Order or CPCN proceeding . . . Staff is bound by Commission precedent."

Similarly, in testimony submitted to the Senate Finance Committee in 2020, the PSC stated that, "...the Commission is not mandated to make decisions about labor standards...". It is important that the PSC keep labor standards and equity front and center. We need a PSC that is able to fully consider these proposals' climate change and labor impacts.

In a world that is both literally and metaphorically on fire, there is no room for state agencies to ignore climate change and it stands to reason that the PSC – a core part of state government and the principal regulator of electricity in Maryland – should take into consideration the State's own climate commitments.

Under this legislation, the PSC would be required to:

- Consider climate change in its regulation of the electricity sector, based upon the best available scientific information recognized by the IPCC and achieving our state climate goals.
- Consider climate impacts when reviewing applications for new electricity generating facilities, and when it approves the sites for new facilities.
- Ensure that state agencies have also considered climate when providing input to the PSC regarding applications for new facilities.
- Require energy companies applying to the PSC to disclose the benefits they will give to workers on specific energy projects.

The bill also would require state agencies to address the climate impacts of proposed power plants (based upon the best available scientific information recognized by the IPCC) when providing input to the PSC regarding applications for new facilities.

This climate and labor "test" provides a necessary and straightforward solution to the current significant flaw in Maryland's climate efforts due to the PSC not considering climate change when making energy-related decisions.

For these reasons, we ask you to support legislation that would institute a climate test at the PSC.

Signed:

350 Montgomery County (350MoCo)

Advocacy and Training Center

Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Central Maryland Beekeepers Association

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund (CCAN AF)

Clean Air Prince George's

Climate Law & Policy Project

Climate Steward of Greater Annapolis

Climate XChange

Creation Care Action & Advocacy of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of UMC

Eastern Panhandle Green Coalition

Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Laurel

Food & Water Watch

Frack Free Frostburg

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

Howard County Climate Action

Indivisible Howard County

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)

LiUNA, Balt/Wash Laborers District Council

Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Maryland Legislative Coalition

MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights

MOM's Organic Market

Mountain Maryland Movement - Frostburg

Our Revolution Howard County

Safe Skies Maryland

Strong Future Maryland

Sunrise Movement Baltimore

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County Chapter

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Women Indivisible Strong Effective (WISE)