



**Maryland
Public Health
Association**

Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy

Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

SB0076 Climate Crisis and Education Act

Hearing Date: 2/2/21

Committee: Budget and Taxation

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you, Chair, Senator Guzzone and Vice-Chair Senator Rosapepe, for giving us this opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) in SUPPORT of the very important SB0076 – Climate Crisis and Education Act.

Without question, climate change is an urgent public health threat. The Maryland Public Health Association is, therefore, compelled to support the common sense purpose of SB0076 to incentivize the reduction of carbon pollution emissions with a practical path toward a sustainable, vibrant economy in Maryland. This bill tackles the urgent need to reach net-zero emissions, and at the same time, raises much-needed revenue to fund education and green infrastructure. The bill also protects those who have been most burdened by the impacts of pollution to date, namely low-income, and predominantly Black and Brown communities.

From extreme heat, flooding, air pollution, and extreme storms, climate change increasingly impacts health across the state. Exposure to extreme heat or elevated levels of air pollution (such as ozone and particulate pollution) contributes to heat-related illnesses and significantly increases the risk of hospitalization for asthma, heart attacks, cardiovascular disease, and premature death.¹ These health effects are preventable. Yet, without smart policies to change the current climate trajectory, we can expect untenable health care costs over time. It's more economically important to INVEST NOW in climate-protective strategies to prevent projected problems - as opposed to spending wasteful money later on infrastructure repairs and medical bills. Evidence-based strategies to prevent problems is the foundation for public health.

Over the past year we have seen how interconnected the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, air pollution, and inequity are. A robust study by Harvard recently found that even a small increase in long-term particulate (PM2.5) exposure led to an 11% increase in the COVID-19 death rate.² The burning of fossil fuels is one of the biggest contributors to deadly air pollution, such as particle pollution. Communities of color and low-income communities bear a disproportionate burden from fossil fuel pollution. The environmental justice and health equity components of this bill are critical to ensuring that everyone benefits from a transition to a clean energy future, especially those overburdened by fossil fuel pollution.

What the pandemic has shown us, is that we must treat COVID-19, climate change, and health inequities in tandem. The Climate Crisis and Education Act is an investment in this effort. It sets smart goals to help Maryland reach zero-emissions and makes smart investments in clean energy infrastructure and education. Please support SB0076.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education and advocacy in support of healthy Marylanders living in healthy communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

¹<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/Documents/MCCC/Publications/Reports/MarylandClimateandHealthProfileReport.pdf>

²Wu X, Nethery RC, Sabath MB, Braun D, Dominici F. Air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: Strengths and limitations of an ecological regression analysis. *Science Advances*. 2020;6(45).

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