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January 29, 2021

The Maryland Senate Finance Committee

SB0148 Maryland Coal Community Transition Act

Position: Support

Maryland remains home to five large coal-fired power plants contributing to public health problems, climate change, and forest and stream degradation.

For this reason, Audubon Maryland-DC asks you to vote SB0148 out of committee and onto the floor. We are one of 22 state programs of the National Audubon Society with approximately 19,000 members in Maryland.

Power plants that burn coal pump out toxic and dangerous pollution like lead, mercury, selenium, smog-forming nitrogen oxides, and acid rain-causing sulfur pollution. Surface water and soil acidification have been especially bad for the state's trout streams and many species of birds, especially at high elevations.

Over 85% of Marylanders live in counties that do not meet EPA healthy air standards for smog pollution, and our coal plants are a major source of smog-forming pollution. Smog exacerbates respiratory problems like asthma, which disproportionately impacts children, the elderly, and communities of color in Maryland. It kills birds outright.

Coal plants are the #2 source of in-state climate pollution. They provide less than 14% of the state's electricity but generate over 75% of the pollution from in-state electricity generators.

Other states, like New York, New Mexico, Montana, Colorado, and Washington, are already implementing coal transition policies. Coal plants are on their way out across the country. Maryland needs a plan to responsibly guide us off coal and ensure that our workers and impacted communities are making decisions about how to thrive in the clean energy economy.

Currently every one of the state's coal plants is sited in marginalized communities. This legislation will create a Coal Community Transition Plan and Account, governed by those who will be most impacted by the power plant closures, and supported by a dedicated, protected funding stream to provide worker retraining, fill wage gaps, supplement retirement security, and support the tax-bases of affected localities.

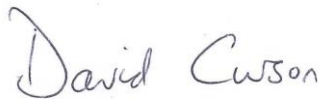
It's time to free birds and impacted communities from the oppression of polluted air and a degraded environment. Maryland cannot meet its climate action goals and transition to a cleaner

and safer energy economy while continuing to burn coal for power. In 2021, we need a plan to phase out our state's coal-fired power plants, protect birdlife, and support the impacted workforce with a worker transition plan.

Please vote SB0148 out of committee and vote FOR it when it hits the floor.

Sincerely,

David Curson, PhD

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Curson". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and legible.

Director of Bird Conservation
Audubon Maryland-DC