

HB729 - Environment - Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act

Date: February 15th, 2022

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: Favorable

Davonte Douglas, Maryland Policy Fellow - Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

On behalf of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund, I urge a favorable report from the committee on **HB729 - Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE)**. As we move towards a greener future, Maryland's universities need to set a positive example by reducing their carbon footprint and becoming carbon neutral.

The CCAN Action Fund is the advocacy arm of Chesapeake Climate Action Network, a grassroots organization dedicated exclusively to fighting for bold and just solutions to climate change in the Chesapeake region of Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC. We believe that the state government has a crucial role to play in mitigating climate change and should lead by example in all efforts to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. This is particularly important in the education sector which produces and nourishes Maryland's scholars. As a student at Howard University and a native Maryland resident, I'm passionate about HB729 because of its goal to transform Maryland institutions and its potential to influence similar goals in Washington D.C. institutions.

Climate change is a major threat to humanity. Maryland, with its 3,100 miles of shoreline, is the fourth-most vulnerable state to experience climate change-induced sea-level rise. Extreme weather events, changes in climatic patterns, sea-level rise, and air pollution will leave no one in our state untouched. Our actions to combat climate change must be swift and precise in order to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy climate stability.

Maryland's higher education institutions are known around the world as beacons of research and societal progress. Public universities have a responsibility to protect, educate, and produce well-rounded and well-informed future leaders. Unfortunately, these public institutions have massive carbon footprints due to their high-tech research facilities, energy needs, and transportation needs. The University System of Maryland emits more carbon than all other state agencies combined.


HB729 makes Maryland Public Universities leaders in carbon reductions and climate justice by:

- Requiring carbon neutrality by 2035 (scopes 1 and 2 by 2025)
- Establishing an Environmental and Economic Justice Scholarship Fund for in-state students displaced by climate change or from environmental justice communities
- Facilitating the sharing of best practices and resources through establishing offices of sustainability at each institution
- Conducting a feasibility and implementation study for a sustainability education

requirement for each institution.

We believe that this bill is an important step in the path to meeting Maryland's net zero emissions goals while also ensuring that Maryland's institutions reduce their carbon footprints. As a current student at Howard University and a native Maryland resident, I believe that HB729 could inspire neighboring institutions in Washington D.C. to make similar commitments to reducing their carbon footprints.

Thank you for your consideration of HB729. For all the reasons stated above, we urge a favorable vote from the committee.



CONTACT: Davonte Douglas, Maryland Policy Fellow
davonte@chesapeakeclimate.org