



February 25, 2022

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB729 – Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act

Position: Favorable

RE: Testimony in support of HB729 (FUTURE Act)

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and all members of the Appropriations Committee

The University of Maryland, Student Government Association supports HB729. This bill will:

- Require higher education institutions to become carbon neutral
- Provides appropriate accountability measures through verification of carbon offset methods
- Designates specific faculty to handle sustainability issues and the requirements of this bill
- Requires MHEC to study the feasibility of a sustainability general education requirement in higher education institutions
- Creates Environmental and Economic Justice Scholarship Fund

To the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Steven Berit, and I am the Speaker Pro Tempore with the University of Maryland, College Park's Student Government Association. On behalf of our SGA, I respectfully request a favorable report of House Bill 729 to ensure higher institutions within the state of Maryland are acting in a manner beneficial to our environment.

The passing of this act would require higher education institutions within Maryland to become carbon neutral by 2035. My university is already set to become carbon neutral by 2025, but this would ensure that all other public 4-year universities are doing their part in preventing climate change. Universities are notably large emitters of natural gasses causing damage to both the local and global environments. Mandating carbon neutrality within these universities would lessen the damage these universities cause to the environment. Although being carbon neutral while



purchasing a lot of offsets is still not a permanent solution, it is a great first step in bettering our environmental future.

The FUTURE Act also provides a lot of other benefits to the students of these universities. Sustainability education is essential to ensure that the many students who attend these universities that will go onto work for major corporations will be educated in sustainable practices that will prevent further damage to our environment by these corporations. Additional scholarships will also be provided to students as mandated by this act further ensuring that all students are given the opportunity to higher education. Finally, establishing a permanent Office of Sustainability within each college will ensure that all universities maintain regular checks in their progress of becoming a more sustainable institution following the passing of the FUTURE act.

On behalf of the students at the University of Maryland, we request a favorable vote on HB729.

Sincerely,

Steven Berit
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