



Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB1290 - Education-Public School Construction - Funding and Administration

Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing

Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 1, 2022

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB1290. The MLC Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on this bill.

This bill furthers the work of the Built to Learn Act and advances equity and environmental justice goals for disadvantaged communities by increasing state matching funds for important improvements for school construction, major renovations, and maintenance; and for building new schools to be net-zero (i.e., schools that produce more electricity than they use), and imposes monitoring and reporting requirements on the Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC). The bill:

- Increases the State share by 10% for schools with a high concentration of poverty (and by 5% for schools with a somewhat lower concentration of poverty) for construction and renovation projects;
- Increases By 5% the State share for construction of net-zero schools (i.e., schools that produce at least as much electricity as they use);
- Provides incentives for schools to be well-maintained; and
- Requires the IAC to annually inspect and report schools for health & safety issues, including lead paint, asbestos hazards, air quality (including carbon dioxide pollutants), comfort and sanitary issues, emergency communication equipment, and functionality of the schools operating infrastructure.

Currently, too many of Maryland's students and educators are burdened with inadequate and outdated public school buildings, which causes disproportionate harm to Black and Brown school children. Baltimore City has a childhood asthma rate at double the national average which significantly boosts absenteeism among students. This issue is compounded by the vicious combination of warming temperatures and poor school infrastructure — 35 Baltimore City schools closed at one point recently because their air conditioning was insufficient to deal with heat waves. These schools, and others in the state, need the help that HB1290 offers.

It is also important that the bill extends help in funding net-zero new schools. Buildings in Maryland are 40% of Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions and Maryland's 1400 schools need to be part of the solution to reaching Maryland's climate goals. As demonstrated by the three new net-zero schools in Maryland (two in Baltimore City and one in Howard County), net-zero and net-zero ready schools cost no more than conventional schools to build and because they produce the same or more energy than they use, they are substantially cheaper to operate. Further, net-zero and net-zero ready schools offer so much more than cost savings. The improved ventilation and air quality are known to improve student mood, alertness and health. The increased funding for new net-zero schools provided in HB1290 more than offsets any potential extra cost for the installation of the solar panels themselves and provides an important incentive for schools to research and act on this option. Further, by building net-zero now, we will be reducing operating costs for those schools and we will be insulating the schools from the projected dramatic increase in gas delivery rates. The MCCC (Maryland Commission on Climate Change) has projected that as we transition to cleaner buildings, gas delivery rates will increase 2 to 5 times over what they are now. See MCCC [Building Energy Transition Plan](#). And of course, current events are showing that gas rates are already rising.

We owe it to our children to educate them in clean, healthy, and environmentally sustainable buildings. Other pending bills this session on school energy systems (HB365), making our universities and colleges carbon neutral (SB471/HB729), school composting (HB150/SB124, HB566), and replacing diesel school buses with electric (HB696/SB528) are exciting and important steps forward. We should all support this legislation to make our children's future brighter.

For these reasons, we request a FAVORABLE report for HB1290.

MLC Climate Justice Wing:

Assateague Coastal Trust

Maryland Legislative Coalition

MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
WISE
Frack Free Frostburg
Mountain Maryland Movement
Clean Water Action
Howard County Indivisible
Howard County Sierra Club
Columbia Association Climate change and sustainability advisory committee
HoCo Climate Action
CHEER
Climate XChange - Maryland
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/
National Parks Conservation Association
350 Montgomery County
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Audubon Naturalist Society
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Environmental Justice Ministry
Coalition For Smarter Growth
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign
MoCo DCC
Potomac Conservancy
Casa de Maryland
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Clean Air Prince Georges
Laurel Resist
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial Cafos
Wicomico NAACP

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Chispa MD
Climate Law & Policy Project
Maryland Poor Peoples Campaign
Labor for Sustainability
The Nature Conservancy
Clean Air Prince Georges
350 Baltimore
Maryland Environmental Health Network
Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis
Talbot Rising
Adat Shalom Climate Action
Chesapeake Earth Holders
Climate Parents of Prince Georges
Echotopia
Maryland NAACP State Conference,
Environmental Justice Committee