



RE: HB 0100/SB0014, Legislative Initiative to Establish the Sustainable Maryland Program Fund

Favorable

January 21, 2022

On behalf of the Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights, I write to urge your support for HB 0100/SB0014 - establishing that the Sustainable Maryland Program Fund mandate for a minimum annual allocation of \$750,000 be included in the Governor's Budget Bill.

Sustainable Maryland has received no core funding for the last six years. The program has been 99% supported through special project grants. The development and the maintenance of the core program have been under invested. Sustainable Maryland does not have enough resources to issue funds directly to local projects. This bill would allow staff to provide on-going training, peer-networking, and the ability to focus on comprehensive and technical sustainability projects. It will also allow Sustainable Maryland to issue funds and support direct projects to localities, which includes over 85 Maryland municipalities that it has assisted since 2017.

The bill's passage will directly assist implementation of actions in Maryland communities that protect natural resources, facilitate suitable land use, conserve energy, reduce greenhouses gas emissions, and encourage smart growth, all of which are goals an environmental human rights amendment would encourage.

The Sustainable Maryland program has been a leader in sustainability, not only in Maryland, but in the Sustainable States Network. They have served on the network's steering committee for six years, acted as co-chair for three years, and have been actively engaged in the network's equity, climate change, and education working groups. They serve as an ambassador for Maryland's sustainability efforts. While Sustainable Maryland has successfully managed an ambitious program that has demonstrated leadership over the years, their biggest challenge remains insufficient funding.

Programs that have achieved close coordination with their respective states and receive financial support are able to increase community participation, advance state goals, and mobilize a network of statewide sustainability champions.

We urge you to support this bill.

Nina Beth Cardin  
Director, Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights