

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB729– Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying
Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act**

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

The University of Maryland Residence Hall Association supports the FUTURE Act HB729.

Climate change will not wait for us to act. With 3,100 miles of shoreline, Maryland is the fourth-most vulnerable state to the effects of sea-level rise which is caused by climate change. Rural communities will be devastated as increased extreme weather events and changes in climate patterns disrupt planting and harvesting cycles and cause crop and livestock loss. Climate change and air pollutants from fossil fuels make low-income and minority communities more vulnerable to asthma and other pre-existing conditions that exacerbate the effects of diseases like COVID-19. No one in our state will be untouched. We must act swiftly and decisively to protect and restore our climate so that those that will inherit it can enjoy climate stability.

Institutions of higher education have played a huge role in Maryland and around the world as beacons of research and societal progress. Public universities have a responsibility to protect, educate, and create well-rounded and well-informed future leaders of the state. These public institutions have massive carbon footprints due to their high-tech research facilities, energy needs, and transportation needs. **The University System of Maryland is the largest emitter of carbon in the entire state government.**

Youth are utilizing their agency to remind public research institutions of their guiding principles. This legislation will ensure that universities will lead the way in carbon neutrality, address climate change while addressing climate justice, and empower students and institutions.

This bill 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

As elected Student Leaders at the University of Maryland, we have a duty, large or small, to the campus community. When we are asked to share opinions on a certain topic, we are no longer just speaking for ourselves. We are speaking for thousands of other students. Well today, I can confidently say I speak for our over 12,500 constituents when I voice the Residence Hall Association's support for the FUTURE Act. The University of Maryland community is host to over 50,000 individuals on a day-to-day basis. That is larger than most cities in the entire state of Maryland. The FUTURE Act allows college campuses all across the state to start to become environmentally sustainable communities. We can no longer sit idly by as we pass the burden of environmental injustice to the next generation of leadership. We are obligated to not only take action but swift and immediate action to combat the consequences of climate change and the FUTURE Act is a step in the right direction. I am urging this committee to submit a favorable report on HB729 on behalf of all

on-campus students at the University of Maryland College Park. If we do not act now, there may not be a chance to act for those that succeed us.

Respectfully,
Scott Cronin
President | University of Maryland Residence Hall Association