

MD Civilian Climate Corps 2022

Committee: Budget and Taxation

Testimony on: SB0228 Maryland Corps - Revisions

Organization: Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Submitting: Nanci Wilkinson

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Hearing Date: February 9th

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

The Environmental Justice Ministry of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church supports the following letter in full from the Sun Rise Movement and urges the Committee to vote favorably for SB0228-Maryland Corps-Revisions with additional amendments. The Civilian Climate Corps for Maryland would support our faith's covenant affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person by helping others face the Climate emergency.

This bill revises the Maryland Corps program to create a Civilian Climate Corps for Maryland, among other changes. Sunrisers have been fighting for the Civilian Climate Corps and successfully organized for its incorporation into the Build Back Better Act. However, as federal efforts appear uncertain, it is even more important that states like ours establish the most ambitious and progressive Civilian Climate Corps to become undisputed leaders in fighting the existential crisis of our generation.

Some folks may need a primer in what a Civilian Climate Corps actually is. The idea is inspired by New Deal era programs to employ millions of people to help rebuild the country after the Great Depression.. The Civilian Climate Corps would similarly create good jobs, but it would fund projects that mitigate the climate crisis. A Civilian Climate Corps would also account for the failures of the New Deal era by ensuring that not only white men benefit from new jobs and projects, but black and brown, low income, women, lgbtqa and youth as well.

Additionally, a progressive Civilian Climate Corps should fund and attract funding for *good jobs* with a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, the right to organize for collective bargaining, health insurance and wraparound services. It should also the *right projects* in green energy and climate justice projects.

This bill sets a decent standard for the *good jobs* criteria, providing a \$15 minimum wage, health insurance, and wraparound services. However it does not identify the *right projects* in green energy and climate justice. Instead it only suggests that this program will cover parks staffing shortages. This language should be altered to explicitly include "Clean energy projects and Climate Justice Projects."

There is another bill this session, proposed by Senator Pinsky, Chairman of the Education Health and Environmental Affairs committee, Climate Solutions Now Act, that has the opposite

problem - it identifies the *right projects* for a Civilian Climate Corps but does not deliver on providing *good jobs* - which this bill does

We encourage the Committee Chair and Senate President to work closely with Senator Pinsky to synergize the best aspects of these two bills to ensure that the version of the Civilian Climate Corps that passes this session creates both *good jobs* and the *right projects*.

Language from Climate Solutions Now Act concerning the right projects could be incorporated into this bill or vice versa: the standards for wages and benefits from this bill could be incorporated into that bill, or both. We believe that working together to either merge the bills or creating two programs that both create good jobs in the right projects will result in a beneficial Climate Corps in Maryland, so long as both criteria are met.

We also have suggested amendments that do not appear in either version of the Climate Corps. One is to guarantee the right for corps members to organize for collective bargaining and strike. Another is for political organizing rights outside of working hours. We must guarantee that the new wave of green collar jobs are good jobs, and the way to ensure they will stay that way is by empowering green collar workers through civic rights such as collective bargaining and political organizing.

Another amendment we suggest is to make any Climate Corps program open to all ages, but to prioritize young people, historically marginalized, and working class groups in hiring.

We encourage a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS Report for this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Nanci Wilkinson
Environmental Justice Ministry
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church