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**Committee: Budget and Taxation**

**Testimony on: SB0228 Maryland Corps - Revisions**

**Organization: MLC Climate Justice Wing**

**Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair**

**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

**Hearing Date: February 9, 2022**

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering our testimony. The MLC Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of grassroots and professional organizations who advocate for climate justice. We urge you to vote favorably for SB0228 - Maryland Corps - Revisions with additional amendments

This bill revises the Maryland Corps program to create a Civilian Climate Corps for Maryland, among other changes. It is important that states like ours establish the most ambitious and progressive Civilian Climate Corps to become undisputed leaders in fighting the climate crisis.

The idea of a Civilian Climate Corps 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 do 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, the Climate Solutions Now Act, that identifies the right projects – but does not yet have provisions for 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*.

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 agree with the Sunrise Movement's suggested amendments to guarantee the right for corps members to organize for collective bargaining and strike and to have 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.

Additionally, we agree with Sunrise's remaining proposed amendment 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.