

Committee: Budget and Taxation
Testimony on: SB0228 Maryland Corps - Revisions
Organization: Park School of Baltimore
Submitting: Deven Hafiz
Position: Favorable with Amendments
Hearing Date: February 9th

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering our testimony. I am a high school student at the Park School of Baltimore and there has not been a time in my life where climate change has not been an existential reality. I hope both my children and I are able to live productive lives in a world where not only do we have access to nature but basic human rights such as water. But even more, it *must* not be available to the privileged few, but to everyone. And that starts today, at home, in Maryland. This is a tangible and essential piece of the larger effort. I strongly urge you to vote favorably for SB0228 - Maryland Corps - Revisions with additional amendments, and thank you for your commitment to the continual welfare of your constituents.

This bill revises the Maryland Corps program to create a Civilian Climate Corps for Maryland, among other changes. Many 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.

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 identify] the *right projects* in green energy and climate justice.

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 unite 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*.

Several options are available: (1) language from Climate Solutions Now Act concerning the right projects could be incorporated into this bill, (2) the standards for wages and benefits from this bill could be incorporated into the Climate Solutions Now Act, or, as I urge, each bill should include both elements. I 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 in any bill intended to serve as a Climate Corps.

I also suggest three further amendments. The bill should guarantee the right for corps members to organize for collective bargaining and to strike. Second, it should include 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 basic rights of labor such as collective bargaining and political organizing.

Finally, the bill should make any Climate Corps program open to all ages, but prioritize hiring of young people, historically marginalized, and working class groups.

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

Sincerely,
Deven Hafiz