



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB0708 – Comprehensive Climate Solutions

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Hearing Date: March 4, 2022

Bill Contact: Delegates Kumar Barve and Dana Stein

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 3000 members in all districts in Montgomery County as well as several nearby jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep Maryland residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0708 because it directly addresses all of these goals.

Recent reports from world-wide climate scientists make it very clear that we are already in a climate emergency and can no longer wait -- we must act now and rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions if we are to avoid the most disastrous effects of climate change due to global warming. With more than 3000 miles of coastline, Maryland is one of the states most at risk of climate change, so it is critical that we take commensurately strong actions.

HB0708 includes the most important actions Maryland needs to take now to reduce the existential threat of climate change:

- Increasing the state's greenhouse gas reduction target from 40% to 60%, with an interim target date and requiring development of a plan for making Maryland net-zero by 2045.
- Requiring monitoring and reporting of methane emissions, a more potent greenhouse gas, from landfills.
- Establishing a Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub, similar to a program in D.C , to act as a clearinghouse for information, technical advice, and financial incentives for the public and professionals. This Hub is designed in large part to support the provisions of a companion bill, HB0831, being considered by the Environment & Transportation Committee, that addresses greenhouse gas emissions by large commercial and multifamily buildings.
- Requiring the Public Service Commission to establish a transition planning process for gas and electric companies.

Importantly, HB0708 leads with equity and focuses on helping communities that are disproportionately affected by climate change and requires involvement of black and brown communities, labor, and youth in achieving the goals of the legislation and shaping implementation plans. To do this, HB0708 tasks the existing Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to solicit input from all segments and communities in developing strategies to address the priorities of environmental justice communities, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and co-pollutants in the communities that have a disproportionate concentration of polluting industries and highways. The commission will also

- coordinate with vulnerable communities that are particularly challenged by storm surges, heat islands, lack of tree canopy, and other effects attributable to climate change;
- coordinate with and report to the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), from which the MDE will act on those recommendations; and
- establish goals for the percentage of state funding for greenhouse gas reduction measures to be used to benefit disproportionately affected communities

In addition, HB0708 will establish a Just Transition and Retraining Work Group, composed of representatives of labor, the NAACP, and formerly incarcerated individuals, as well as registered apprenticeship sponsors, representatives of the solar and wind industry to assist in a just transition for those impacted by changes to a new green economy and energy industry. HB708 will also create a Climate Justice Corps composed principally of young people to create career training opportunities in the new green economy, particularly for youth from disadvantaged communities.

Furthermore, HB0708 will expand programs under the EmPOWER program run by the utilities to:

- increase the percentage of EmPOWER funding from 2% to 2.75% by 2028;
- encourage replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems with heat pumps, giving priority to low-income households; and
- encourage beneficial electrification (i.e., incentives for consumers to switch from gas to electric for purposes of reducing energy consumption, reducing consumer costs, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions).

These are all smart and necessary activities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland and help those most affected by climate change. **However, we recommend including the following amendments championed by the Coalition of Climate Partners to strengthen the bill and align its provisions with SB0528, the Climate Solutions Now bill, moving through the Maryland Senate:**

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals – change the initial target from 60% by 2032 to 60% by 2030 to align with SB0528.

Climate Catalytic Capital Fund – add a Climate Catalytic Capital Fund (C3 Fund) in the Maryland Clean Energy Center (MCEC) similar to the provisions in SB0528 to provide funds for implementing climate solutions. The MCEC is Maryland’s Green Bank. Providing seed money for the C3 fund, would give the state the ability to leverage public investment with private capital. For every \$1 of public investment that fund is projected to generate \$4 to \$7 of private capital.

Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub – move the Climate Transition and Clean Energy Hub from the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to the Maryland Clean Energy Center, since MEA disagreed with recommendations by the Maryland Commission on Climate Change which could affect MEA’s implementation of the Hub.

Environmental Justice - replace the term “disproportionately affected communities” with “overburdened communities,” and add a requirement that 40% of funding for greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures go to “overburdened communities”.

Climate Justice Corps – strengthen the Climate Justice Corps by amending it to require good pay, health benefits, and career training similar to other civilian corps programs and to make it more consistent with SB0528 as amended.

EmPOWER – broaden EmPOWER to focus also on GHG reduction and align the dates for enhanced EmPOWER targets with those in SB0528.

In summary, DTMG strongly supports this smart ambitious bill which is part of a larger legislative package addressing climate change and urges a **FAVORABLE report on HB0708 with the amendments** listed above.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Bartlett
Co-lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team
oliviabartlett@verizon.net
240-751-5599