



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 708 - Comprehensive Climate Solutions

SPONSOR: Del. Barve

HEARING DATE: March 4, 2022

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS House Bill 708 - Comprehensive Climate Solutions**, which updates the broad Climate goals of the State from a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 (2006 baseline) to a 60% reduction by 2032, and net-zero emissions by 2045. In addition, it creates a variety of requirements for workforce development, procurement and building standards to work towards that goal, with focuses on environmental justice and low-income opportunities.

Prince George's County recently released a Climate Action Plan, reflecting our appreciation of the urgency of the Climate Crisis, and the need to identify solutions. The overarching goals of the Climate Solutions Now Act align with our own, and we are eager to support many of the diverse solutions offered. The County leads the state in waste diversion programming, community solar adoption and other GHG reduction efforts. We have begun a concerted effort to educate residents about community resilience and climate mitigation and adaptation needs. We are excited to support the State of Maryland in being a leader on Climate Solutions.

The County is extremely supportive of the drafters' efforts to address inequities and target solutions to the communities most affected by environmental injustice. New programs, like the Climate Justice Corps combine best practices from tried and true programs, like AmeriCorps and JobCorps, and target the needs of people most vulnerable to the increasing impacts of Climate Change- while working to build inclusive resilient communities from the ground up. The creation of the Just Transition and Retraining Working Group aims to bring experts together to offer their expertise to State and Local bodies- empowering Maryland to stay on the cutting edge, be inclusive in its policy-making, and build the economy and workforce of the future.

Proposed Amendments:

Funding Sources for Critical Climate Measures

The Climate Crisis requires an urgent response at all levels of government. It is imperative to meet the GHG reductions needed to avert the worst effects of climate change and build communities that are resilient enough to withstand the inevitable increased impacts- including severe storms, extended droughts, and health effects. However, the costs of making these changes through every part of our communities cannot rely solely on the residential property taxes, the primary source of revenue for most of our County governments. The State must make funding available at the scale to support these efforts. The costs of the improvements in this bill to our County government as written is at a scale of hundreds-of-millions of dollars. An increased commitment to focusing State funding to achieve these reductions and the collaborative development of alternative financing and funding mechanisms is required to achieve this urgent and necessary goal together.

Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities Task Force

Amend the Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities task force to include local government representation from Prince George's County, Baltimore County and Baltimore City.

Prince George's County is among nation's wealthiest majority African American communities, and yet has the lowest average income in the DC metro area and has both urban and rural census tracts with environmental justice equity challenges. According to the University of Maryland's EJ Screen Tool, the great majority of the census tracts with the most significant environmental injustices are in Prince George's County, Baltimore County and Baltimore City. Thus we recommend these jurisdictions be included in the Task Force.

Just Transition and Retraining Working Group

Similar to the Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities Task force, Prince George's County should have a government representative on this body.

Landfill Methane Emissions

Rather than setting a proscriptive standard for airplane data observations, a methane emissions working group, consisting of experts in the field, and County representatives with expertise operating the landfills across the state, should be convened to develop a data protocol and methodology for ground, airplane and other methane observations. Such task force should also develop recommended improvements to the current methane emissions standards for landfills, including municipal solid waste landfills, construction and demolition landfills and other regulated landfills. Those recommendations should be taken into account by MDE in the development of emissions regulations.

It is critical to note that landfill regulations focus on the waste already in the landfill, rather than the need to divert methane-producing food and organic wastes going forward. It is critical that while the MDE develops emissions standards, it consider that retroactively requiring the installation of landfill capture technology, without any cost-benefit analysis of the actual ability of those measures to offset methane emissions is a poor use of limited funding that could be used to divert waste and prevent future emissions.

The County is in the process of developing a study in partnership with state, federal and university experts to identify improved landfill emissions measurement methodologies- we are optimistic that this study can inform future standards. The County recommends a balanced approach- both appreciating the urgency of the Climate Crisis, while taking the time to make the most impactful decisions with limited resources.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS HB 708 WITH AMENDMENTS** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.