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TO: C. T. Wilson, Chair of Economic Matters Committee and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support HB 708 Comprehensive Climate Solutions

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB 708 offered by Delegates Barve and Stein. In Maryland, TNC's work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. TNC has an institutional goal to help to reduce emissions by avoiding or sequestering 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by 2030. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

HB 708 seeks to increase Maryland's emissions reduction goals to 60% of 2006 levels by 2032 and targets net-zero emissions by 2045. This presents us with an opportunity to once again demonstrate our state's ambition and commitment when it comes to approaching climate change head-on. In addition to setting overall state goals, this bill addresses the major carbon emitting sectors in Maryland through dedicating resources and capacity to identify and implement projects that improve access to clean and reliable transportation as well as install renewable energy systems and undertake retrofits for buildings.

The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), released this week, paints a vivid picture of the climate emergency's real-world impacts and maps out repercussions for humans and nature if climate trends continue. In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, which are already compounding extremes across the globe, we must take bold and immediate actions to reduce carbon emissions. Global leaders have agreed that net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is a planetary imperative. This is no small feat and will require a range of solutions applied together to reach the goal, including transitioning our economy away from carbon-emitting fossil fuels, increasing our use of clean energy sources, harnessing the power of nature to capture carbon, and deploying technologies that capture and store carbon.

Around the globe, many of the people who are impacted first and most severely by climate change have contributed far less to increasing carbon emissions. In cities and settlements, the IPCC reports that increasingly severe and frequent climate-induced hazards and extreme weather events have "contributed to cascading effects of infrastructure damage, loss of services and economic activity, damage to heritage resources, safety concerns and disrupted livelihoods." These impacts have been especially harmful to Indigenous Peoples, whose cultures, identities, commerce, health and wellbeing are closely connected to environmental resilience. Making transformative changes to reduce emissions across Maryland will not only help meet global goals, but will positively impact places in our state that are facing elevated public health risks and concentrated poverty by reducing pollution, creating new job markets and building more resilience.

TNC commends Delegates Barve and Stein for continuing to raise the bar for Maryland's climate commitments and advancing climate solutions that can provide valuable environmental, economic, and public health co-benefits for years to come.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 708.