



Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Testimony on: SB0528 Climate Solutions Now Act

Organization: Sunrise Movement Maryland

Submitting: Stephen J Leas

Position: Sunrise Baltimore Hub Representative

Hearing Date: February 15th

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for considering our testimony. Sunrise Movement is a youth-led movement calling for sweeping legislation to fight the climate crisis and create good jobs in the process. Sunrise Movement Maryland is the coalition of our hubs and members across the state. We urge you to vote favorably for SB0528 - Climate Solutions Now Act with additional amendments.

The climate crisis is undoubtedly one of the greatest existential crises humanity has ever faced. Warming temperatures already severely impact disproportionately Black, brown and low income communities. Climate change is expected to burden young people with ecological devastation and increasingly insecure access to fundamental human rights such as clean water, air, and livable ecosystems. We must combat this crisis by rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing energy efficiency, and creating good paying, well benefitted jobs in renewable energy and climate justice projects, including through the creation of Climate Corps programs.

This bill takes important steps toward achieving these goals. We are especially excited for the creation of a Climate Justice Corps, as our movement has organized tirelessly to rally for Climate Corps programs. However, the Civilian Justice Corps as it is written is flawed because it does not guarantee good wages or benefits.

Truly just Maryland Climate Corps programs should have two features - create *good jobs* and the *right projects*. To meet criteria for *good jobs*, they should fund and attract funding for jobs that



guarantee a minimum stipend of \$15 per hour and is thereafter tied to the state minimum wage, health insurance, wraparound services, and an education award of \$6000. They should also identify the *right projects* in renewable energy and climate justice.

This bill sets a very good standard for the *right projects* criteria in green energy and climate justice projects in communities hit hardest by environmental and social injustices. However it does not meet the criteria for *good jobs*. The bill instead allows the overseeing Board to determine stipends based on the needs of the volunteer and the limits of budgetary appropriations. Unfortunately, without guaranteeing good pay and benefits, it will not deliver on the economic and racial justice goals of a Climate Corps. As written, it defeats the multifaceted purpose of a Climate Corps, which is to create good paying and well benefitted jobs primarily for young people in black, brown, and working class communities, competing with polluters' narrative power over good jobs, and creating an upward pressure on wages.

As currently written, the program would place climate justice projects in the same realm as unpaid/low paid internships, in which more privileged applicants who can afford to work for low pay and zero benefits will take the opportunity, while those who cannot afford to work without good pay and benefits will be excluded. It is important that the "Climate Justice Corps" not be a misnomer. Unfortunately, allowing marginalized Corps members to be underpaid and under insured as they commit to the necessary labor of repairing environmental injustice makes it so.

For these reasons we urge the Committee to ensure that the Climate Justice Corps program pay a minimum wage of \$15 per hour and be tied to the state minimum wage thereafter. We also urge the committee to ensure that health insurance, wraparound services, and an educational award are provided to Corps members.

We suggest that the language regarding those provisions be consistent with language from Senate President Bill Ferguson's Maryland Corps, which also includes the creation of a Civilian Climate Corps program. It would be beneficial for both Senate President Bill Ferguson's Civilian Climate Corps and Climate Solutions Now Act's Climate Justice Corps to pass this session with mutually consistent language regarding wages, benefits and types of projects. This will ensure that two



Climate Corps programs will pass this session that create *good jobs* for the *right projects* and would make Maryland a national leader for Climate Corps programs.

In addition to those most urgent amendments, we also suggest three further amendments: The bill should guarantee the right for corps members to organize for collective bargaining and to strike. Second, political organizing should not be barred outside of working hours as green collar workers are likely to be vitally important to winning climate justice in political arenas. Finally, the bill should make any Climate Corps program open to all ages, but prioritize hiring young people, historically marginalized, and working class groups.

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

Sincerely,

Sunrise Movement Maryland
Sunrise Baltimore
Sunrise Howard County
Sunrise UMD
Sunrise Silver Spring
Sunrise UMBC
Sunrise McDaniel
Sunrise Frederick
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Cedar Lane Environmental Justice Ministry
Molly Perkins Hauck, Ph.D., Licensed
Psychologist

MLC Climate Justice Wing
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment
Committee
Unitarian Universalist Environmental
Justice Ministry
Our Revolution, Howard County, MD
Friends of Saqib Ali
Strong Future Maryland
WISE
Climate Law & Policy Project
Progressive Maryland
Stream Team Prince George's County



Amendments

- Replace stipend criteria in CSNA with the more robust benefits guaranteed to corps members such **\$15/hr *minimum wage, health insurance, wraparound services & education support* \$6000 education bonus** exactly as they appear in MD Corps (SB228).
- Remove pg 29 line 25 - 29
- Replace in whatever format is legally or procedurally preferably so that the overseeing Board adopt policies to ensure good pay and benefits and criteria consistent with provisions from Maryland Corps (SB228) 24-1105 (B) sections 5 - 8, and (5) should also be amended to tie the minimum stipend of the Civilian Justice Corps to the state minimum wage hereafter:
 - (5) STIPENDS FOR PARTICIPANTS, INCLUDING:



- (I) MONETARY PAYMENT OF AT LEAST \$15 PER HOUR , HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS, AND THE POTENTIAL FOR WRAPAROUND SERVICES;
AND
- (6) AN EDUCATION AWARD OF \$6,000 FOR PARTICIPANTS THAT COMPLETE AT LEAST 9 MONTHS OF SERVICE, WHICH SHALL BE DEPOSITED INTO A TAX-EXEMPT MARYLAND 529 ACCOUNT ESTABLISHED UNDER TITLE 18, SUBTITLE 19 OF THIS ARTICLE AND MAY ONLY BE USED FOR QUALIFIED HIGHER EDUCATION EXPENSES, AS DEFINED IN § 18-1901 OF [SB0228];
- (7) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING AND WRAPAROUND SERVICES PROVIDED TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY PARTICIPATING.
- (8) ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE PARTICIPANT’S SERVICE;
- The bill should define the “wraparound services” included in the program the same way that it is defined in SB0228 on page 3 (lines 18 - 25) through page 4 (lines 1 - 3) as follows
 - (G) “WRAPAROUND SERVICES” INCLUDES:
 - (1) CHILD CARE;
 - (2) TRANSPORTATION;
 - (3) HOUSING;
 - (4) MENTAL HEALTH;
 - (5) CRISIS INTERVENTION;
 - (6) SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION OR TREATMENT;
 - (7) LEGAL AID;
 - (8) FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAMMING;
 - (9) JOB SEARCH AND APPLICATION SUPPORT; AND
 - (10) COLLEGE APPLICATION SUPPORT.



- **Corps members should have the right to organize for collective bargaining and the right to strike, and should be protected from being discharged, disciplined, or permanently replaced for striking.**
- **The provision barring political organizing should be removed.**
- **Remove the age range of corps members and prioritize applicants under 35 years old.**