



*Mission:* To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy *Vision:* Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities

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**SB0528 Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022**  
**Hearing Date: January 15, 2022**  
**Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Thank you, Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, committee members and fellow bill sponsors, Senators Ferguson, Kelley, Guzzone, Smith, Kagan, Waldstreicher, Lam, Washington, Patterson, Hester, Ellis, Zucker, Kramer, Hettleman, Young, Sydnor, Hayes, Watson, Beidle, Carter, Augustine, Elfreth, Feldman, Jackson, King, and Lee.

We submit this testimony on behalf of the Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) to express our SUPPORT for SB0528 – Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. We appreciate this bill’s purpose to save lives with smart strategies to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045, reduce environmental injustice, reduce emissions from buildings, and create a workgroup to protect workers’ jobs. We view this bill as an important step to improve the lives of all Marylanders.

As you know, climate change is an urgent public health threat. From extreme heat, flooding, air pollution, to the easier spread of disease and more, climate change is impacting health across the state. Exposure to elevated levels of air pollution from greenhouse gasses and related increases in ozone and particulate pollution, contributes to asthma attacks, cardiovascular disease and premature death. Exposure to higher and more lingering heat (especially for outdoor workers), significantly increases the risk of costly heat-related illness, and hospitalization for asthma and heart attacks.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past year we have seen how interconnected the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, air pollution, and inequity are. A robust study by Harvard found that even a small increase in long-term particulate (PM2.5) exposure led to an 11% increase in the COVID-19 death rate.<sup>2</sup> The burning of fossil fuels is one of the biggest contributors to deadly air pollution, such as particle pollution.

Communities of color and low-income communities bear a disproportionate burden from the pollution caused by vehicle exhausts, inefficient landfills and incineration emissions, and out-of-date building construction. The environmental justice and health equity components of this bill are critical to ensuring that Marylanders benefit from a transition to a clean energy future and “green-collar” jobs, especially for residents overburdened by fossil fuel pollution.

What the pandemic has shown us is that we must treat COVID-19, climate change, and health inequities in tandem. The Climate Solutions Now Act is a step in the right direction. It will save lives and improve

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<sup>1</sup><https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/Documents/MCCC/Publications/Reports/MarylandClimateandHealthProfileReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Wu X, Nethery RC, Sabath MB, Braun D, Dominici F. Air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: Strengths and limitations of an ecological regression analysis. *Science Advances*. 2020;6(45).

health by reducing air pollution from fossil fuels and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions that worsen climate change. Please support this bill.

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education and advocacy in support of healthy Marylanders living in healthy communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*