

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 9, 2022

Testimony in Favor of SB0014
Sustainable Maryland Program Fund - Establishment

Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 14 to create an annual appropriation of \$750,000 for the Sustainable Maryland Program. This legislation passed this Committee and the Senate unanimously in the 2020 session before early-adjournment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Sustainable Maryland (SM) Program was first established in 2011 at the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland. SM is a free outreach and certification program that helps Maryland municipalities and communities pursue a sustainable future. SM provides jurisdictions with a comprehensive suite of policies, resources, direct support, and incentives designed to help communities advance a broad range of sustainability goals.

Since its inception, SM has:

- Registered 54% of Maryland's municipalities in the program – with 45 municipalities currently holding the Sustainable Maryland Certified designation (36 of which have recertified at least once).
- Mobilized and trained more than 60 Green Teams in municipalities across the state, from Garrett County to Ocean City.
- Developed local leadership by providing training and education opportunities that have collectively engaged more than 1,400 elected officials, local government staff, and community members across the state.
- Certified and cataloged over 2,200 individual sustainability actions taken by SM- Certified communities.
- Assisted 19 communities with implementing watershed stewardship programming for residents.

Most notably since this Committee last heard this legislation in 2020, the Sustainable Maryland Program has moved to collaborate more with Homeowners' Associations (HOA) throughout Maryland to progress residential sustainable practices, initiatives, and standards.

SM has been largely funded through a variety of grants, and, if passed, the guaranteed funding in this bill would greatly support this proven program by ensuring that our communities can fully utilize the full-slate of resources to support sustainability efforts. This Committee knows more than most that we cannot reach our 2025 Watershed Implementation Goals without fully engaging our municipalities and HOAs in our Bay clean up efforts.

As the General Assembly continues on the path to clean energy and the reduction of greenhouse gasses we must ensure that our smaller communities have the tools they need to move towards sustainability as well. Once again, I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 14.