



**SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**Senate Bill 471**  
**Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions**  
**(FUTURE) Act**  
**February 15, 2022**

**Favorable with Amendments**

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on the Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act. The University System of Maryland (USM) supports the intent of Senate Bill 471 and is dedicated to the same critical goals of reducing energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and achieving carbon neutrality. The USM also appreciates the advocacy of students who continue to lead this charge. With their grassroots efforts, and under the leadership of each campus president, USM institutions have demonstrated significant progress. For example:

- Since 2007, we have completed (or are developing) nearly 80 “Green” (LEED Silver or better) facilities. More than half are funded with non-State or auxiliary resources.
- All USM facilities are designed and built to the standards of the State’s High Performance (Green) Building Program, and all meet similar standards for “smart growth” and “coast smart” construction.
- All USM institutions and the Universities at Shady Grove signed the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment and are publicly reporting their progress in reducing carbon emissions as part of a national database.
- Collectively, USM institutions have documented nearly a 40% reduction in CO2 emissions (a reduction of about 350,000 metric tons each year) since 2007. According to the EPA, that’s roughly the equivalent of removing 76,000 cars from the road.

USM institutions are key participants in State energy reduction programs, including efforts in support of the Governor’s Executive Order. In the last decade, our institutions have made significant reductions in energy use by changing campus behavior, utilizing energy performance contracting, and an enhanced reliance on renewable energy sources. The average energy reduction exceeds 15%, while the average use of renewable sources is 37%.

There remains some uncertainty regarding the full cost of achieving carbon neutrality without use of offsets by 2055, but we’re confident we can achieve that goal with adequate

enhancement of current resources. Achieving the target for carbon credit-assisted neutrality by 2025 (for campus heating plants and purchased electricity) and by 2035 (for campus travel and commuting) will require a shift in resources, resulting in impacts on State operating support and changes in campus funding priorities.

Given the wide range of legislative activity on climate-related issues, the USM urges a consistent, state-wide rollout of carbon reduction goals, extending beyond higher education to all of state government. Given the integrated and interdependent nature of the state's operating and capital funding programs, changes in support for one agency can impact available support for all others. The identification and purchase of appropriate carbon offsets, as well as the efficacy of the proposed Environmental Justice Investment initiative would benefit from wider coordination among all state agencies.

Generally, it's important to know in what manner lawmakers intend to prioritize funding for adaptation versus mitigation and the existing levels of spending for each type of activity. Climate-related projects and programs should (1) have clearly defined objectives, (2) be well coordinated across different government entities, (3) have effective strategies and resources for evaluating future outcomes. An increase in the amount of general fund resources allocated to climate-related activities, including significant out-year commitments need to be part of the discussion. The USM urges the General Assembly to think broadly about its priorities and the role of the general fund – as well as nonfinancial tools, such as regulatory programs – in achieving its climate goals.

A planned, methodical shift to clean, renewable energy sources made as building and plant components reach the end of their life cycle will be far more affordable, but it will take decades to fully implement. The goal of carbon neutrality is critically important and the technology to achieve it is improving every year.

It is difficult to estimate the cost differences of this bill from the other significant climate change bills that impact our campuses. However, with the FUTURE Act we expect additional costs in taking a leadership role. With assistance from the State we are more than willing to take that lead and believe it will save the State money in the long term.

The USM is staunchly committed to the goal of carbon neutrality and recognizes that achieving this goal will require additional resources, so we request that the bill be amended to include language that will help ensure sufficient state financial support for this undertaking. We look forward to working with the committee and the bill sponsor to craft that language.



**About the University System of Maryland**

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of 12 institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards 8 out of every 10 bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of 21 members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.