

Testimony of Elly Cowan

Director of Government Relations, Preservation Maryland

Before the
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 15, 2022

Pertaining To: SB528, Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022

Support

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of smart growth and preservation in Maryland. Through our Smart Growth Maryland program, Preservation Maryland advocates for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns.

SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 528

Preservation Maryland supports SB528, Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. This omnibus bill seeks to address the climate change crisis and environmental justice issues that face our state. The legislation will increase Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction requirements to 60% below 2006 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2045. The bill would also address environmental justice by establishing the Climate Catalytic Capital Fund to support emissions reducing projects in overburdened communities, directing MDE, in consultation with the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities, to research and gather data on cumulative impacts and overburdened communities, and establishes a Climate Justice Corps. The bill creates a work group comprised of labor leaders, legislators, the Secretary of Labor's office, climate groups, and renewable energy companies to make recommendations on how best to serve fossil fuel workers in Maryland. It also works to remove emissions from buildings, which are one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gasses.

We are in the midst of a climate change emergency, with the urgency of the crisis growing every year. The opportunity to take the necessary aggressive actions to effectively mitigate the worst effects is dwindling. Maryland's more than 3,000 miles of shoreline and more than 265,000 acres of low-lying land make our state one of the most vulnerable to sea level rise and the effects of increasingly violent weather events, and we are already seeing the devastating effects all across our state. Additionally, this legislation is grounded in the understanding that climate justice is environmental justice, with climate change disproportionately impacting the health, environment, and income of many low-wealth communities and communities of color.

Maryland has an opportunity to demonstrate real leadership in climate policy and show the rest of the country what is possible. The Climate Solutions Now Act puts us on this path. Therefore, I respectfully urge a favorable report of SB528.

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