



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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SB 528 – Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 15, 2022

INFORMATION

Donna S. Edwards
President
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Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit informational testimony on SB 528 – Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

The time for action on Climate Change is past due. Labor unions understand the fierce urgency of this battle for the future of our children and grandchildren. Workers and their families are on the front line of this struggle, making a living at traditional energy jobs, clean energy jobs, adaptation and mitigation construction jobs, and in myriad secondary and tertiary industries that directly affect energy and the environment.

As we transition to a low-carbon economy, it is important that we demand new energy jobs are family-sustaining careers and not simply new low-wage and minimal-benefit dead-end jobs. Traditional energy careers have buffeted and built the middle class and made our everyday lives possible and more comfortable for decades. Transitioning to a clean energy economy must empower our workers who have spent their careers helping power our state and country. Vitally important is providing a just transition to those currently working in traditional energy, as well as their families and their communities that are oftentimes severely negatively impacted by well-intended, but nonetheless, woefully thought-out and poorly implemented environmental policies that eviscerate these small towns.

I have attached to this testimony “Resolution #7: Resolution on Climate Change and Jobs”, that was unanimously passed at our 32nd Biennial Convention in November of 2019. It is the position of the AFL-CIO, the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO, and all of our affiliated unions, that we must do two things simultaneously: Fight Climate Change and protect and support workers. To that second point, we make it very clear in the Resolution how best to move forward on good job creation and a just transition to ensure that current traditional energy workers, as well as those in

industries that would be impacted by reducing our carbon production, are not left behind to fend for themselves. I would ask that you review Resolution 7 to have a full understanding of the position of labor unions and climate change.

SB 528 has a great deal of commendable provisions that will reduce our carbon footprint for the State. It also creates the Just Transition Employment and Retraining Working Group to start the process of tackling the very difficult challenge of re-structuring our economy for the future with an eye on workers in the present.

However, there is one area that is not specifically addressed throughout the bill: **Labor Standards for the jobs of the future**. I recognize that there is not an opportunity within SB 528 to define labor standards for new energy jobs due to the nature of the legislation. That does not negate the need to demand good standards on jobs created through each expansion of our clean energy sectors in Maryland.

Labor unions are heartened that there are no attempts to ban forms of energy within SB 528. The bill is much more focused on building up capacity in clean energy industries, instead of creating energy deficits through poorly thought-out bans. But, SB 528 does not address the best zero-carbon energy source that is both on-demand and necessary to meet future energy needs: Nuclear. Without nuclear on the table, it is unclear how we transition to clean-energy without significant brownouts and black-outs for Maryland's energy consumers.

Across Maryland and our country, energy professionals of our building trades are building the clean energy economy. We are rebuilding and retooling our energy infrastructure. We are working with the Biden-Harris administration as they invest in good union jobs that will power our economy and communities with clean, sustainable and secure energy. Through pre-apprenticeship requirements in PLAs, we are helping women, people of color and veterans access construction career pathways to middle-class jobs in the clean energy economy.

Labor is hopeful if sound policies are adopted that we can find the right solutions to our two-fold challenge of fighting climate change and, maintaining and creating family-sustaining middle-class careers in the process.

Resolution #7: Resolution on Climate Change and Jobs

WHEREAS, numerous studies suggest that there is major job creation potential from tackling the climate crisis, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and transitioning to a low-carbon, sustainable economy; and

WHEREAS, the overall lack of high-road jobs in the green economy and the prevalence of non-union jobs in the limited existing green sectors, such as solar and residential retrofitting, have dampened enthusiasm for the long-promised “clean, green economy” among workers and labor organizations that are anxious to address the climate crisis and build a pro-worker, equitable green economy; and

WHEREAS, the fossil fuel industries have high rates of unionization; and

WHEREAS, strong job and training quality standards are needed in the clean and renewable energy sector, among them being prevailing wage, state-approved apprenticeship job training requirements, project labor agreements, and labor peace agreements; and

WHEREAS, a functioning jobs pipeline could ensure that local workers from our communities have a path to career employment by offering access to training programs such as direct-entry pre-apprenticeship programs and other skill-building opportunities; and

WHEREAS, these job and training quality standards should be central to all “climate jobs” proposals; and

WHEREAS, climate efforts should include funding and guaranteed protection for workers and communities who are displaced or negatively affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy; and

WHEREAS, the AFL-CIO has developed strong policy proposals for protecting workers who are impacted by climate protection policies. These proposals provide a just transition, including 70% wage replacement and 80% health benefit replacement for up to three years, as well as “bridge to retirement” funding for workers who are near retirement.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO supports measures that ensure that energy infrastructure development creates good jobs and builds our industrial base by requiring project labor agreements, prevailing wage, apprenticeship job training requirements, Buy Union and Buy America provisions, labor peace, card check neutrality, robust training requirements for all projects, and includes all the labor requirements passed in the Clean Energy Jobs law.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO in facing the challenge of impacting energy policies embraces a balanced and just approach for workers, communities, manufacturers, businesses and consumers and will continue to work with community, business and environmental allies committed to recognizing the need for worker protections, rights, and sustainable wages and benefits, to maintain a wide range of energy sources, traditional and newer, to secure Maryland’s and the District of Columbia’s competitiveness.

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO will advocate for legislation, administrative rules, and the development of an initiative to enable a transition that is just for workers and communities directly affected by the transition to a clean energy economy by providing income, benefit, and retraining for comparable wage jobs, as well as a bridge to retirement, as part of the just transition and concurrently support the creation of these policies in an equitable fashion.

Submitted by: *Donna S. Edwards, President*
Maryland State and D.C AFL-CIO
Delegate, AFSCME 112
Gerald W. Jackson, Secretary-Treasurer
Maryland State and DC. AFL-CIO
Delegate, UA 486

Committee: Legislation

Convention Action: Unanimously passed