



ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER



Favorable Testimony – SB 0014

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

We are living in unprecedented times, with an intersection of global crisis having an impact on our local communities. From the climate emergency to the global pandemic, to growing economic instability and ever present social and racial inequalities, the frontline dealing with these issues are our local governments.

To respond to these multiple crises, governments at all levels need to act and adapt. While many Maryland municipalities have already started actively taking measures to address some of these challenges (e.g., formally declaring a climate emergency, developing buy local campaigns, adopting equity committees, etc.), they often face barriers such as inadequate training, a lack of a clear direction, insufficient funding, and limited capacity that stifle action. The Environmental Finance Center's Sustainable Maryland (SM) program works to address these barriers to action and to build local capacity so that communities can thrive.

For the past ten years, the SM program has provided a cohesive, tailored, and replicable process for community-based action that fosters a pipeline for continued engagement between residents and local governments. The program has helped 54 percent of municipalities in choosing a direction for their sustainability efforts and has designated 27 percent of Maryland municipalities as "Sustainable Maryland Certified" for their outstanding accomplishments. In the past three years, this proven framework has also been piloted with residential associations, launching projects in over 20 homeowners and civic associations.

This trusted community resource, that serves as a network for quickly disseminating information to a body of engaged residents, engaging local leadership in addressing multiple challenges, and building connectivity and community across the state, helps to inspire, motivate, and mobilize action. HB 0014 – Sustainable Maryland Program Fund – Establishment will expand and enhance this cost-effective program so that communities across the state can have the needed support to deepen their commitments to sustainability and take action to address the many interconnected crises of today.

After ten years of launching new Green Teams, organizing peer leadership networking events, and facilitating the replication of innovative projects and programs across the state, it is clear that Sustainable Maryland has demonstrated the value and effectiveness of the program. The SM program stands ready to assist the State as they take the necessary actions to address the most urgent issues of our lifetimes. We urge you to support the SM program, which empowers local governments and communities throughout the state to attain sustainability goals and back up the State's commitments with adequate funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Hunninghake".

Mike Hunninghake
Program Manager
Sustainable Maryland