

**Testimony in Favor of SB 471:
Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act**

**Submitted on Behalf of the University Student Government Association at
University of Maryland, Baltimore**

Favorable

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
cc: Members, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Honorable Chair Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My name is Aishwarya Iyer, and I am the Student Body President and MD/PhD Candidate at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB). The UMB University Student Government Association (USGA) represents the students of seven professional schools – the School of Medicine, Law, Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work, Dentistry, and the Graduate School. Our institution confers the majority of healthcare, law, and health services professional degrees in Maryland, and our USGA supports students in their pursuit of serving the public good.

We, the UMB USGA, wholeheartedly support the MaryPIRG Student Climate Action Coalition (MSCAC) in their advocacy of the FUTURE Act. We recognize the dire need for curtailing fossil fuel emissions and other environmental pollutants. We feel that climate advocacy is not only as a moral imperative for future generations, but such advocacy is also required as a health imperative to protect the lives of the thousands of Marylanders that are affected by climate inaction.

In Baltimore, the patients we serve are often exposed to a plethora of toxic exposures – namely, air pollution from fossil fuel as well as from, combustion and extreme heat, exacerbated by “heat islands” created from the heat-trapping effects of air pollution byproducts. Fossil fuels exacerbate climate change and have profound effects on human health. They have been linked to increased health burdens on the cardiovascular, pulmonary, and neurological systems in the human body. Our most vulnerable neighbors are affected by the health impacts of our campus emissions, and have the least access to legal, financial, and social resources to defend themselves. The FUTURE Act presents a prime opportunity to mitigate our emissions, so that we may stop contributing to the health burden that we strive so desperately to address.

The students of our seven schools are forward-thinking and are willing to ask the difficult questions in order to identify the root cause of our patients’ suffering. Structural barriers to wellness are often out of reach of a physician’s prescription pad, but the FUTURE Act’s Environmental Justice Scholarship Fund allows USM schools to use education as a tool to fight systematic inequality. With the act requiring institutions to study the feasibility of a sustainability general education requirement, we can ensure future students are knowledgeable about prioritizing the health of our environment and all those who share it. We look forward to welcoming a more diverse student body – a student body with diverse life experiences, that can relate to and stand up for the populations they serve. The FUTURE Act paves the way for recruiting a student body that truly represents the communities in which our campuses are located. By creating a mechanism to reduce USM emissions, prioritizing environmental justice, and ensuring USM students learn about sustainability, graduate and professional students will be better prepared to serve the communities which surround us- physically and mentally- as we pursue our upper-level degrees and enter our careers. Given the feedback that we have received from our student population here at UMB, we, the University of Maryland, Baltimore University Student Government Association (USGA), fully support the FUTURE Act and believe strongly

UMB USGA

Favorable - SB 471

February 15, 2022

in its ability to improve the health and wellbeing of all Marylanders, if the Act is implemented as prescribed in the words of the bill.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider our concerns supporting the need for the provisions contained within the FUTURE Act. Please feel free to contact Aishwarya Iyer, USGA President, at umb.usga.president@gmail.com with any questions.

Sincerely,



Aishwarya Iyer

President, UMB USGA

On behalf of the UMB University Student Government Association

UMB USGA Senate moved to support and submit this testimony on Wednesday, February 9th, 2022