



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

SB 528 | Climate Solutions Now Act 2022

February 15, 2022

Senate Committee | Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position | Favorable

Testimony

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, committee members and colleagues, my name is Staci Hartwell. I'm the Chair of the NAACP Maryland State Conference, Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, representing the environmental and climate equity interests of our members and BIPOC residents in Maryland.

Seventy-two percent of our population lives in coastal portions of the state. With over 3000 miles of shoreline, our citizens, their homes, and livelihoods are at greater risk from climate change. This exposure could impact \$277B of gross domestic product.¹ With more frequent and intense storms and rising temperatures, Maryland, unlike land-locked states, is at ground-zero for the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

Climate Solutions Now builds a strong foundation for our state to take bold action to tackle the climate crisis. It also starts to pave the way for more equitable climate policy. Low-income and communities of color in Maryland bear the brunt of climate impacts – from being overburdened with polluting sources, to having to spend more while earning less for everyday expenses like heating, cooling, and transport from volatile fossil fuel prices.

Over the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how environmental racism has impacted our state. Years of disinvestment and industry in BIPOC communities caused for many communities of color to be overexposed to pollutants that led to increased deaths from COVID.

Fossil fuel pollution is contributing to the deaths of black and brown people every day and we need to act Now, not next year.

This bill directly works to undo some of the impacts of environmental racism, and it also ensures that all future climate legislation addresses inequities. The Climate Solutions Now Act requires the Maryland Department of Environment to define environmental justice communities and to develop a plan to address the harms of those most impacted by climate change. It would also create the Justice Corps Program to promote climate justice with Green House Gas reduction projects in disproportionately affected communities.

The voters of Maryland entrusted you with the power to make a positive difference, especially for those suffering the most. We hope you are bold enough to “step into that power” and give a favorable report on Climate Solutions Now, because *climate justice, is racial justice*. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Staci Hartwell, Chair
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¹<https://coast.noaa.gov/states/maryland.html>