

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0729– Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying  
Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act**

Dear Chairwoman McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

**Towson University’s Student Environmental Organization supports the FUTURE Act HB0729**

**Climate change will not wait for us to act.** With 3,100 miles of shoreline, Maryland is the fourth-most vulnerable state to the effects of sea-level rise which is caused by climate change. Rural communities will be devastated as increased extreme weather events and changes in climate patterns disrupt planting and harvesting cycles and cause crop and livestock loss. Climate change and air pollutants from fossil fuels make low-income and minority communities more vulnerable to asthma and other pre-existing conditions that exacerbate the effects of diseases like COVID-19. No one in our state will be untouched. We must act swiftly and decisively to protect and restore our climate, so that those that will inherit it can enjoy climate stability.

Institutions of higher education have played a huge role in Maryland and around the world as beacons of research and societal progress. Public universities have a responsibility to protect, educate, and create well-rounded and well-informed future leaders of the state. These public institutions have massive carbon footprints due to their high-tech research facilities, energy needs, and transportation needs. **The University System of Maryland is the largest emitter of carbon in the entire state government.**

Youth are utilizing their agency to remind public research institutions of their guiding principles. This legislation will ensure that universities will lead the way in carbon neutrality, address climate change while addressing climate justice, and empower students and institutions.

**This bill makes Maryland Public Universities leaders in carbon reductions and climate justice by:**

- Requiring carbon neutrality by 2035 (scopes 1 and 2 by 2025)
- Establishing an Environmental and Economic Justice Scholarship Fund for in-state students displaced by climate change or from environmental justice communities
- Facilitating the sharing of best practices and resources through establishing offices of sustainability at each institution
- Conducting a feasibility and implementation study for a sustainability education requirement for each institution

The Student Environmental Organization of Towson University has always been focused on environmental affairs, whether it be through small acts like stream cleanups, or sprawling bills such as the FUTURE act. We urge legislators to vote YES on this bill, as all students should have the security that a carbon-neutral campus gives them. This bill would also guarantee that the areas surrounding our universities do not suffer from our pollutants.

Respectfully,

Jayden Johnstone, Vice President of the Student Environmental Organization.