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Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: SB 61 – “Maryland Transit Administration – Conversion to Zero-Emission Buses (Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act Revisions)”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 15, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 61, which would require the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to provide safety and workforce development training for its operations and maintenance workforces, along with reasonable worker protections as MTA transitions from a diesel-powered state transit bus fleet to a zero-emission state bus fleet.

The training would enable current workers to safely repair and maintain MTA’s zero-emission buses and the charging infrastructure for those buses. State employees adversely affected by the conversion from a diesel to a zero-emission fleet would transition to similar or other employment within the Administration that has commensurate seniority, pay and benefits. No duties or functions of state employees would be transferred to a contracting firm, and any entity that operates or maintains zero-emission buses on behalf of MTA must provide employee protections equivalent to what state workers receive.

The workforce training and employee protections are needed to ensure a smooth and safe conversion to zero-emission buses, and that no worker is adversely affected during the transition. The Sierra Club strongly believes that policies that address climate change and the movement away from fossil fuels must be done in a way that provides for affected workers and at the same time creates high quality “green” jobs. The Sierra Club is the co-founder with the United Steelworkers of the Blue Green Alliance which has grown to include 15 unions and environmental organizations representing some 16 million people. We believe the best climate solutions are also good economic solutions.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.