



## Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

**To:** Senator Pinsky, Chair; Senator Kagan, Vice Chair; and Members of the Committee.

**From:** Jason Ascher, Political Director, Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association – United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters

## **OPPOSE SB 528 – Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022**

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Pipe Trades Association, our five United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters Locals, and our over 10,000 members plus their families across all corners of Maryland, I ask you to **OPPOSE SB 528**.

As an organization whose members build and service fossil fuel infrastructure, this legislation will irrevocably harm the careers of many of our members. These workers have been earning good family-sustaining wages with benefits for, in some cases, decades. They have been working hard, paying their taxes, and taking care of their families without the need for public assistance programs. Their work has ensured that taxpayers across Maryland can turn lights on in their homes, have hot water, and have heat in the cold winters. These members come from diverse backgrounds, such as immigrants from around the world, returning citizens, and some whose membership is a family tradition. Many of these workers will tell you these careers changed their life. Now, this legislation threatens their careers and the livelihood of their families. It does this without a care for what happens to them. These members trained for five years to be the most skilled pipefitter in the industry, their training was at no cost to them or the taxpayers, and they earned wages and benefits that reflect that training. Unrelated to this specific legislation, any discussion in the past of “just transition” has not considered these wages and benefits.

In removing fossil fuel piping systems from commercial or residential construction, you limit the end user’s ability to heat a building or the water entering the building quickly and efficiently. With the problems seen across the state the past few winters with schools closing because the heat doesn’t work, there is a great need to upgrade our schools. The Built to Learn Act of 2020 will help with that but leaving out gas lines to heat the building and water would be detrimental to the children in the school.

The other piece of the assault on my member’s jobs is limiting the renewable energy options available to meet the goals in this legislation. This part is where a “just transition” goes off the rails. Carbon Capture, Nuclear, Natural Gas, Hydro, and Geothermal are energy sources with large quantities of piping. Only some of these are willing to pay the family-sustaining wages and benefits our members earn. Other renewable options such as Rooftop Solar and Wind (except for the offshore wind) look to build their infrastructure as cheap as possible, and they do this by paying low-wage workers to do the job. Nuclear and Carbon Capture needs to be added as Tier 1 renewables because they are the only way you will quickly replace coal and gas to meet the goals of this legislation. Wind and Solar have the least infrastructure to aid in the transition. Before you end fossil fuels and stop installing its infrastructure in new construction and remodels, build more of this renewable infrastructure; otherwise, you put grid stability in danger. As of this moment, as I write this, renewable energy sources are creating 11,547 MW of a total 113,575 MW on the PJM grid (PJM App at 9:30 am on 2/9/22). Currently, the infrastructure doesn’t exist for renewable energy to replace fossil fuels without nuclear added as renewable. As of January of 2020, the country of Denmark, the world leader in wind power, only gets 47% of its energy from the wind after building infrastructure for 40+ years (Reuters 1/2/2020, *Denmark sources record 47% of power from wind in 2019*).

Finally, I return to the just transition. There is nothing “just” about transitioning workers to a lower-paying job with minimal benefits. The last thing a 50–55-year-old who is 10-12 years from a hard-earned retirement wants to hear is they will be retrained for a lower-paying job that will hurt this retirement. As an organization, the United Association of Plumbers and Steamfitters sells a product. This product is a highly trained, skilled, and certified worker for plumbing and pipefitting. Our programs will handle transitioning our members, we just need to know what that transition is so we can adjust our training program, and we will do it without taking a dime from the state to fund the training. This legislation does not layout where that future is, and the workgroup it creates for the “just transition” does not include us. While members of the labor community are part of this workgroup, there is no representation for our members who will lose jobs in significant numbers.

For these reasons I ask you to **OPPOSE SB 528**