

Tuesday, February 16, 2022

TO: Paul Pinsky, Chair of Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee; Guy Guzzone, Chair of Senate Budget and Taxation Committee; and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support SB 528 Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 528 offered by Senator Pinsky. In Maryland, TNC's work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. TNC has an institutional goal to help to reduce emissions by avoiding or sequestering 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by 2030. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

SB 528 seeks to increase Maryland's emissions reduction goals to 60% by 2030 and targets a carbon-neutral economy by 2045. This presents us with an opportunity to demonstrate our state's ambition and commitment when it comes to approaching climate change head-on. In addition to setting overall state goals, this bill addresses the major carbon emitting sectors in Maryland through establishing clear targets and goals to achieve emissions reductions within these sectors.

The buildings sector is one of the largest carbon emitting sectors in our state. This past year, TNC participated in a work group to inform recommendations in the Maryland Climate Change Commission's Building Energy Transition plan, which aims to decarbonize residential and commercial buildings across the state. The Climate Solutions Now Act builds upon this plan's recommendations to set Maryland on a clear path toward significant buildings sector emissions reductions. This bill requires state-owned buildings to meet 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to be net-zero by 2035. Public buildings are set to follow with a 20% reductions goal by 2030, 40% reductions by 2035, and meeting net-zero requirements by 2040. Establishing the Building Energy Transition Implementation Task Force will make meeting these targets possible; this Task Force will study and make recommendations on how best to retrofit buildings and reduce buildings' emissions. New construction will be required to include electric-ready standards to support renewable energy systems. Renewable energy sources and a clean energy economy are an essential part of reaching state, national, and global low-carbon energy goals and combatting the negative health and environmental impacts caused by fossil fuels.

The Climate Solutions Now Act also addresses the transportation sector, which is the largest contributor to emissions in our country, our region, and in Maryland. It accounts for approximately 40% of greenhouse gas emissions statewide, predominately from on-road sources. Gas and diesel-powered vehicles emit air pollutants that harm pulmonary and cardiovascular health. Nitrogen oxides from fossil fuel combustion are precursors of ground level ozone, which trigger asthma attacks. These dangerous health risks disproportionately impact Black and brown communities and low-income neighborhoods. Eliminating emissions from state-owned vehicles will protect public health by reducing the risks from air pollution and will subsequently reduce households' healthcare costs. The Climate Solutions Now Act requires 25% of state-purchased passenger cars to be zero-emissions vehicles by 2023; this increases to 100% of state-purchased passenger cars by 2027. Under this legislation, all state-purchased light-duty vehicles are to be zero-emissions vehicles starting in 2028, with a

100% zero-emissions fleet by 2033. Addressing the state's contribution to the transportation sector's overall emissions is an important step toward achieving statewide climate targets as well as protecting public health.

TNC commends Senator Pinsky and the co-sponsors for continuing to raise the bar for Maryland's climate commitments and advancing climate solutions that can provide valuable environmental, economic, and public health co-benefits for years to come.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 528.