



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 528 - Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022

SPONSOR: Senator Pinsky, et al.

HEARING DATE: February 15, 2022

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS SB 528, Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022** which updates the broad Climate goals of the State from a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 (2006 baseline) to a 60% reduction and net-zero emissions by 2045. In addition, it creates a variety of requirements for workforce development, procurement and building standards to work towards that goal, with focuses on environmental justice and low-income opportunities.

Prince George's County recently released a Climate Action Plan, reflecting our appreciation of the urgency of the Climate Crisis, and the need to identify solutions. The overarching goals of the Climate Solutions Now Act align with our own, and we are eager to support many of the diverse solutions offered. The County leads the state in waste diversion programming, community solar adoption and other GHG reduction efforts. We have begun a concerted effort to educate residents about community resilience and climate mitigation and adaptation needs. We are excited to support the State of Maryland in being a leader on Climate Solutions.

The County is extremely supportive of the State's efforts to address inequities and target solutions to the communities most affected by environmental injustice. New programs, like the Climate Catalytic Capital Fund provide flexible sources of funding to enable innovative solutions. The Climate Justice Corps combines best practices from tried-and-true programs, like AmeriCorps and JobCorps, and targets the needs of people most vulnerable to the increasing impacts of Climate Change- while working to build inclusive resilient communities from the ground up. Improvements to the Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities Task Force and creation of the Just Transition and Retraining Working Group aim to bring experts together to offer their expertise to State and Local bodies- empowering Maryland to stay on the cutting

edge, be inclusive in its policymaking, and build the economy and workforce of the future. Further, the efforts to lead by example, including the electrification of the state fleet, and state buildings provide a testing ground for the use of new technologies, and the scaling of solutions.

However, to strengthen this bill, the Prince Georges County Executive's Office recommends the following amendments:

Funding Sources for Critical Climate Measures

The Climate Crisis requires an urgent response at all levels of government. It is imperative to meet the GHG reductions needed to avert the worst effects of climate change and build communities that are resilient enough to withstand the inevitable increased impacts- including severe storms, extended droughts, and health effects. However, the costs of making these changes through every part of our communities cannot rely solely on the residential property taxes, the primary source of revenue for most of our County governments. The State should make funding available at the scale to support these efforts. The costs of the improvements in this bill to our County government as written is at a scale of hundreds-of-millions of dollars. An increased commitment to focusing State funding to achieve these reductions and the collaborative development of alternative financing and funding mechanisms is required to achieve this urgent and necessary goal together.

Inclusion on Environmental Justice, Transition & Retraining Task Forces

Prince George's County is among nation's wealthiest majority African American communities, and yet has the lowest average income in the DC metro area and has both urban and rural census tracts with environmental justice equity challenges. According to the University of Maryland's EJ Screen Tool, most of the census tracts with the most significant environmental injustices are in Prince George's County, Baltimore County and Baltimore City. Thus, we recommend Prince George's County, Baltimore County and Baltimore City be included in the (1) Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities, (2) Building Energy Transition Implementation and the (3) Just Transition and Retraining Working Group Task Forces.

Electric School Buses

Expand the cost measures for electric buses to include not only the buses themselves, but the costs of development and maintenance of the infrastructure to charge, maintain and operate them.

Landfill Methane Emissions

Create a methane emission working group, consisting of experts in the field, and County representatives with expertise operating the landfills across the state, in place of a proscriptive standard for airplane data observations. The work group should develop a data protocol and methodology for ground, airplane, and other methane observations. Such work group should also develop recommended improvements to the current methane emissions standards for landfills, including

municipal solid waste landfills, construction and demolition landfills and other regulated landfills.

The landfill regulations as described focus on the waste already in the landfill, rather than the need to divert methane-producing food and organic wastes going forward. Retroactively requiring the installation of landfill capture technology, without any cost-benefit analysis of the actual ability of those measures to offset methane emissions is a poor use of limited funding that could be used to divert waste and prevent future emissions. While the California standards are one metric to consider in developing Maryland's emissions regulations, the delta between what landfill operators are currently doing, and any proposed standard requires study and analysis.

The Bill as written represents approximately a 285-million-dollar investment in capture technology at just one landfill, without sufficient analysis to determine if that technology is going to produce any significant reduction in emissions. The County recommends a balanced approach- both appreciating the urgency of the Climate Crisis, while taking the time to make the most impactful decisions with limited resources.

Building Performance

The County has joined the White House's Building Performance Standard's working group and is committed to improving the energy efficiency of public, commercial and multifamily buildings. However, adopting a code is a challenging process, and the 2018 International Green Construction Code is a complex code designed to be an optional code with alternative compliance mechanisms. The timeline for adoption does not allow time to evaluate the successes and challenges experienced by Baltimore and Montgomery Counties, who have each adopted heavily amended versions of the code. An approach that will allow an inclusive, collaborative adoption of a voluntary code, and a progressive adoption of mandatory standards and alternative compliance pathways is recommended. Further, training and funding is needed to prepare the County government to adopt and enforce any new requirements, voluntary or mandatory.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 528** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.