

February 15, 2022

**Committees:** Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Testimony on:** SB471 – Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act

**Position:** Favorable

RE: Testimony in support of SB471 (FUTURE Act)

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and to all the members of this committee,

*The University of Maryland, Student Government Association* supports SB471. This bill will:

- Require higher education institutions to become carbon neutral
- Provides appropriate accountability measures through verification of carbon offset methods
- Designates specific faculty to handle sustainability issues and the requirements of this bill
- Requires MHEC to study the feasibility of a sustainability general education requirement in higher education institutions

As students at the University of Maryland, College Park, we are in favor of Senate Bill 471 as it places environmental preservation and justice at the core of its mission. By requiring each public senior higher education institution in the state to become carbon neutral, the role of universities as contributors to the climate crisis can be addressed effectively. As many universities have taken ample steps to improve their carbon footprint, this bill fills in the additional gaps needed to handle the climate crisis in our most pivotal institutions. Many institutions are on track to achieving carbon neutrality, yet with the guidelines outlined in SB471, these efforts can be fast-tracked more efficiently to achieve those goals.

This bill additionally places strong emphasis on the importance of our educational institutions in the fight against our current climate crisis. The feasibility report, in combination with the Environmental Justice Scholarship Fund, allows for our strong educational institutions to empower future leaders in environmental preservation. It is imperative that the foundation for future environmental preservation efforts are set forth in SB471. Without such foundation, academic institutions will be unable to deliver the consistent and appropriate measures of sustainability. As future leaders, we believe the FUTURE Act enables our educational institutions to serve as a role model for other institutions across the state, showcasing the devotion that Maryland has towards improving the climate crisis.

We request a favorable vote on HB729.

Sincerely,

*Lily-Max Cooke*

*Student Government Association, University of Maryland, College Park*

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