

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 Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, Senator Mary Beth Carozza, Senator Arthur Ellis, Senator Jason C. Gallion, Senator Katie Fry Hester, Senator Clarence K. Lam, Senator Obie Patterson, Senator Edward R. Reilly, Senator Bryan W. Simonaire, Senator Mary Washington

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
- Creates Environmental and Economic Justice Scholarship Fund

As a student at the University of Maryland, College Park, I am strongly in favor of SB471. The University System of Maryland (USM) is the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the state government, while simultaneously representing youth who aim to build better futures for themselves and scientists who are on the front lines of climate science research. As a student who aims to create a liveable future, I strongly support FUTURE Act's solutions which help universities to take strong actions to curb their own climate impact, as well as advance climate education and environmental and economic justice.

Specific solutions I support in the FUTURE Act include the mandated carbon neutrality for Maryland public four-year universities by 2035, the Environmental and Economic Justice scholarship fund, creating or strengthening Offices of Sustainability, and lastly, laying the foundation for a Sustainability General Education Requirement. By adding carbon to the atmosphere, universities contribute to climate change and add pollutants to their communities. These harms fall disproportionately on low-income and minority communities, hence the need for the environmental and economic justice scholarship fund to help pay the social cost of carbon. I also support that Universities must establish an Office of Sustainability to help further their understanding of climate science. This will foster best practices and resources in the larger

campus community as well as just the University. Lastly, the FUTURE Act lays the necessary foundation for a Sustainability General Education Requirement through a feasibility study. Working towards ensuring all students have a general understanding of sustainability and climate science is a huge step towards creating interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability, and ingraining it in everyday studies. The FUTURE Act is a necessary piece of legislation in order to create a planet that is safe and livable for years to come.

We request a favorable vote on SB471.

Sincerely,

Caroline Thorne, Student Government Association at the University of Maryland — College Park, cthorne@terpmail.umd.edu