

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: SB0471 Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act

Submitted by: Donald M. Goldberg, Executive Director

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 15, 2022

Climate Law & Policy Project strongly supports Senate Bill 471 and urges a favorable report.

SB471 requires Maryland public colleges and universities to reduce their Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions to become carbon neutral over time. The institutions must be carbon neutral for Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2025 and for Scope 3 emissions by 2035. The bill also encourages the purchase of waste and wastewater technology that will help achieve these goals.

While SB471 permits the use of offsets, projects that generate offsets must be “additional,” follow best practices, be located in the United States, and utilize well-established and approved verification procedures.

This year’s bill introduces a feature we applaud. For each ton of offset, the difference between the cost of the offset and the Federal Government’s social cost of carbon is deposited in the Environmental Justice Scholarship Program. The fund’s proceeds will be used to provide scholarships to support students from Environmental Justice Communities or communities displaced by climate change. In addition to providing equitable funding for scholarships, this provision will help ensure the integrity of offsets by removing any financial incentive to procure them at the lowest possible cost.

CLPP believes SB471 will accelerate construction and renovation of all school buildings to meet net-zero energy and net-zero ready standards. CLPP has conducted research on the cost of achieving net-zero energy consumption in schools and found costs of such buildings are relatively small and can often be negative over the buildings’ lifetime.

The last two net-zero energy public schools constructed in Maryland were built for the same cost as average conventional schools *with solar panels included*. This means that, over their lifetimes, these schools will be cheaper than conventional schools.

Based on our research, CLPP believes that if SB471 passes Maryland’s public colleges and universities will save money while making a significant contribution to Maryland’s greenhouse gas emission goals.

CLPP urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 471.