



March 7, 2022

Delegate Kumar Barve
Chair – Environment and Transportation Committee

Mr. Chair,

On behalf of the 800+ combined members of the two leading civic and business groups in the Salisbury area, we write you today regarding the Climate Action Now Act of 2022.

We are aware that this considerable piece of legislation has many moving parts, and has been introduced in both the House and Senate, as, primarily, SB 528 and HB 831.

Please know, we write today NOT in opposition to the Climate Action Now Act of 2022. Our organizations are keenly aware, and in support of, the State of Maryland's goal of reducing our carbon and emissions footprint, and to build a more sustainable energy future. As you likely know, both of our organizations are strong leaders and advocates for the Offshore Wind facilities that are coming off the coast of Maryland. So, this is not about opposing the worthy and aspirational energy goals that the state has laid out.

Rather, this letter is to ask your consideration to alter things that, in our opinion, make this bill too onerous for too many Maryland businesses. We will lay out a few specific requests, relative to the bills that are making their way through Committees, in the hope that you may work them into any final legislation that passes.

Specifically:

- As you know, many businesses here on the Eastern Shore must deal with competition from the State of Delaware, which hugs the entirety of the Shore. Requiring electric-only without choice on Maryland businesses, particularly those located so close to Delaware, may cause harm and increased costs to manufacturers, businesses, the ag community – and residential customers. We urge you to extend the timeline for these “electric-only” requirements.
- The electrical building mandate – and eliminating fossil fuels, including natural gas, as an option – could cause an unintended ripple effect. Jobs could be lost. Consumers who can least afford it may be burdened beyond their means. We urge you to provide the necessary incentives that will allow businesses and consumers to be able to offset the costs required to go “electric only.”
- Somerset County now has a natural gas pipeline, something that was completed within this last year. This pipeline will be critical to UMES and to the Eastern Correctional Institution, and to future economic development opportunities in one of Maryland's most rural and poor counties. We urge you to slow down the timeline for “electric only” implementation.

- In SB 528, removing the prohibition of fossil fuels as an energy source for water and space heating in new building would be helpful. We urge you to consider allowing a longer phase-in period for this requirement.
- We urge you to consider striking in its entirety the building code portion requiring the elimination of fossil fuels. Our rural areas don't have adequate infrastructure to support these new mandate

In short, we are asking, respectfully, to slow down a bit. Please consider timelines that will be more pragmatic for the businesses and consumers here on the Shore and in the other rural areas of our State. The transition away from fossil fuels and toward more green energy sources is notable and is supported by our organizations. Maryland has one of the most aggressive goals to reduce emissions, but we believe that an acceleration of those goals will cause too many unintended consequences.

We thank you for your consideration.



William Chambers
President/CEO
Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce



Mike Dunn
President/CEO
Greater Salisbury Committee