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Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 894 – “Transportation Electrification and Modernization (TEAM) Act”
Position: Favorable with amendment
Hearing Date: February 25, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 894 with one amendment. The bill was introduced on behalf of the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to authorize creation of new incentive programs and modification of an existing incentive program designed to encourage the purchase or lease of zero-emission vehicles and recharging equipment for those vehicles. The programs also would provide incentives to help pay for installation of the vehicle recharging equipment and would all be administered by MEA.

HB 894 would extend and enhance MEA’s Electric Vehicle Recharging Equipment Rebate Program, establish the Medium and Heavy-Duty Zero-Emission Vehicle Grant Program, establish the Maryland Zero-Emission Vehicle Rebate Program, and authorize the use of the Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund to provide supplemental funding for zero-emission vehicles and zero-emission vehicle infrastructure programs that benefit environmental justice communities.

The amendment we propose regards one aspect of the Maryland Zero Emission Vehicle Rebate Program. In keeping with the name of and intent of that program, the amendment would add a fourth requirement for a fuel cell electric vehicle (see page 8 of the bill, lines 4 to 10) to be eligible to receive a rebate. The power for the fuel cell electric vehicle, which most likely would be hydrogen, must be produced using a zero-emission source such as solar or wind power.

Transportation is now the largest contributor to climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland. Vehicle tailpipes also are a major source of toxic emissions including benzene, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and tiny particulate matter (PM2.5) that are linked to various cancers, heart disease, asthma, emphysema, other respiratory diseases, and premature death. Vehicle tailpipe emissions also contribute to ozone, smog, and acid rain. More than 85% of Marylanders live in counties that do not meet federal clean air standards for ozone. Ground level ozone damages crops, trees, and other vegetation. Acid rain affects soils, lakes, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay, and enters the food chain via water, produce, meat and fish.

Zero-emission vehicles emit no greenhouse gas or toxic pollution from their tailpipes and have much lower fuel and maintenance costs. Programs such as those proposed or modified by this legislation, which encourage the purchase or lease of zero-emission vehicles and recharging equipment and fund the installation of vehicle recharging stations, deserve our support.

Passage of HB 894 containing the amendment described above would be good for public health and our environment. We urge a favorable report on this bill with the amendment we propose.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.