



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB814

**Environment - Statewide Green Business Certification Program -
Statement of SUPPORT**

Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein and esteemed members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB814, a bill that will, as written, establish a statewide Green Business Certification Program, based in part on the successful program currently running in Montgomery County. This introduced bill is identical to a bill that passed out of this committee in both 2020 and 2021, and out of the House of Delegates both years, but did not have enough time for consideration in the Senate prior to adjournment. This year, this bill has been cross-filed with Senator Lam and has been heard before the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee.

In December 2009, Montgomery County, in partnership with Montgomery College and the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, launched a green business certification program to encourage businesses to implement environmentally-friendly practices. The program is voluntary and robust, and includes participation from a number of diverse businesses from hotels to restaurants, grocery stores and local farms.

The state of Maryland currently operates a Maryland Green registry, a voluntary state-wide program in which businesses can self-evaluate and determine how they qualify. Around 560 businesses state-wide participate, and the program provides “resources to help businesses and other organizations set and meet their own goals on the path to sustainability.”¹ Businesses sign up online, identify five green practices, and provide one measurable result.

By contrast, the Montgomery County program is more rigorous. It includes a separate audit by the Department of Environmental Protection every three years, and allows businesses to receive recognition if they are already enrolled in other recognized national green business certification programs. Businesses certify that they engage in certain green best-practices including waste management/reduction, reducing the use of certain pesticides on agriculture, using organic or alternative materials, and engaging in methods that promote increased air and water quality. In 2015, the certification program expanded eligibility as an umbrella recognition program, accepting businesses certified through outside third party

¹ MD Green Registry: <https://mde.maryland.gov/MarylandGreen/Pages/Home.aspx>

standards and allowing nearly all sectors to be eligible.² Sectors eligible for certification include restaurants, offices, hotels, cleaning companies, landscapers, home-based businesses, farms and others.

Under Montgomery County's program, the DEP makes an appointment every three years with the GBC business or soon-to-be-GBC business and goes through a checklist.³ There are six sections of the application that include:

- organizational commitment,
- waste reduction,
- environmentally preferred purchasing,
- energy/water efficiencies,
- transportation/travel practices,
- Sustainable Landscaping and Stormwater Management.

There are 10-20 items under each of those qualifications. Some are as easy as putting up signs, while others are more detailed like purchasing recycled content or offering a mass transit benefit for employees that utilize it to get to work. The Montgomery County program charges businesses \$100 to enroll, however if the business is certified under a third-party program, those programs can range from \$100 to \$25,000.

By qualifying for any of the various certifications, businesses receive recognition and benefits from being a Green Business. These benefits include: increasing sustainability, increased consumer support and competition, and creating a healthy work environment. Several states have Green Business Programs including CA, AZ, CO, IL, NE, WA.⁴

The sponsor amendment that has been shared with this committee and with EHE amends the bill to establish a study that would be conducted by the University of Maryland's Sustainable Maryland program. The study requires that the Sustainable Maryland program consult with stakeholders from across the state, and within 18 months make recommendations to this Committee and to the Senate EHE Committee on how to best establish a green business program that addresses the triple bottom line. The amendment makes this bill stronger, as it ensures that the program built here in Maryland is based on data and ultimately is complementary to our existing state green registry.

Respectfully, I request a favorable report on HB814. Thank you.

² Third-parties included: B Lab, Green America, the Green Restaurant Association, Green Seal, the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System, Veriflora® Sustainably Grown, USDA Organic Program, Certified Naturally Grown and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).

³ Montgomery County GBC Checklist: <http://www.mcgreenbiz.org/s/Green-Office-Application.xlsx>

⁴ National Green Business Tracker: <https://greenbiztracker.org/site/participating>