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Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 507 – “Environment – Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure - Environmental Justice Considerations”
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 16, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 507 that would require any unit of state government that develops electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure or administers public funding for the development of EV charging infrastructure to use environmental justice guidelines when selecting communities where EV charging stations would be located.

It is generally recognized today that wealth is unequally distributed across this country. Black households have a fraction of the wealth of White households and have fewer economic opportunities. According to the most recent Census Bureau data available, Black people comprise approximately 14.2% of the U.S. population, but Black businesses comprise only 2.2% of the nation’s 5.7 million businesses with more than one employee.

One way to help address this inequity would be to require that new spending on infrastructure be equitably distributed among residents and locations. Applying environmental justice guidelines, as HB 507 would require regarding spending on EV charging infrastructure, would ensure that low income and disadvantaged communities receive their fair share of state funding for EV charging station development.

In 2021, Governor Hogan announced that \$3.7 million from Maryland’s settlement with Volkswagen for air pollution violations would be used to install EV charging stations at 37 sites around the state. There is no indication that environmental justice was considered when deciding where those charging stations would be located. Requiring that environmental justice guidelines are followed going forward is especially important now as the recently passed federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act calls for the allocation of \$7.5 billion to states for the installation of EV chargers.

Transportation is the largest contributor to climate-disrupting greenhouse gases in Maryland and our nation today, and is a major source of toxic emissions that are hazardous to human health. Most of that pollution comes from the tailpipes of gas and diesel-fueled cars and trucks on the road today. Unlike conventionally-powered combustion engines, plug-in EVs require little or no gasoline or diesel fuel and emit little or no air pollution from their tailpipes. EV ownership in Maryland increased by more than 160 percent from July 1, 2018, to August 2, 2021, from 13,207 to more than 36,000 registrations, according to the latest Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program. Such growth in EV ownership, which surely will continue, demonstrates an ever-increasing need for more EV charging infrastructure around the state.

In summary, considerable public funding will likely be spent installing EV charging infrastructure around the state. The Maryland Sierra Club agrees that environmental justice should be a determining factor when the state decides where to locate EV charging stations around the state. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

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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.