



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Ben Grumbles, Secretary
Horacio Tablada, Deputy Secretary

March 9, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 1263- Environment – Office on Climate Change – Establishment

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or the Department) has reviewed HB 1263 entitled, *Environment – Office on Climate Change – Establishment*, and would like to provide information on the current bill.

HB 1263 would establish the Office on Climate Change (Office) within the Governor’s Office. The provisions in this bill would be duplicative of work currently being performed by MDE in coordination with the Governor, the Governor’s cabinet agencies, the Chesapeake Bay Subcabinet, and the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC or the Commission). The specific provisions that would be established under this bill are discussed in detail below.

HB 1263 would require the Office to “coordinate with the Commission on Climate Change to ensure the Commission’s recommendations are implemented.” MDE chairs the MCCC and works in partnership with the Commission and other state agencies to implement the recommendations that the Commission makes for action by state agencies. It is important to note that some recommendations may need legislative action, which would impact the ability of the executive branch of government to ensure, per the bill language, that those recommendations are implemented.

Secondly, HB 1263 would require the Office to “ensure that each State agency addresses: ways the agency can mitigate the causes of climate and the impacts of climate change in the agency’s programs, policies, and financial expenditures.” The requirement for state agencies to perform the above provisions already exists in state law under Environmental Article § 2-1305, which among other provisions, requires each state agency to “review its planning, regulatory, and fiscal programs to identify and recommend actions to more fully integrate the consideration of Maryland’s greenhouse gas reduction goal and the impacts of climate change.” The Department coordinates with other state agencies to perform these tasks under current law.

HB 1263 would also require the Office to “initiate and oversee any additional research or investigations the Office determines are necessary to address factors that the Office determines are substantial in fighting climate change but are not included in the Commission on Climate Change’s recommendations.” As mentioned above, in addition to the work that MDE does in coordination with the MCCC, MDE’s Climate Change Program develops Maryland’s long term climate plans under the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA). Developing the plans involves comprehensive emissions and economic impact analyses to evaluate the programs and initiatives needed in order to address climate change and meet or exceed the goals in the GGRA. The Climate Change Program also regularly performs additional research and analysis on specific topics.

Additionally, HB 1263 would require the Office to “work with local governments to: develop and implement local climate change plans and identify resources needed for the implementation of local climate change plans.” Per current Environmental Article § Section 2-1302, one member of the Maryland Association of Counties and one member of the Maryland Municipal League represent local governments on the MCCC. There is currently active coordination between the MCCC, the MCCC Mitigation Working Group, MCCC Adaptation and Response Working Group (ARWG), and local governments. As an example, the ARWG works with the Maryland Climate Leadership Academy, which provides training for local government officials and employees on various ways to plan how to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Lastly, HB 1263 would require the Office to “report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the state’s efforts to mitigate the causes of, prepare for, and adapt to the consequences of climate change.” This is duplicative of the current requirement under § Section 2-1304 for the MCCC to submit an annual report to the “Governor and General Assembly, on the status of the State's efforts to mitigate the causes of, prepare for, and adapt to the consequences of climate change, including future plans and recommendations for legislation, if any, to be considered by the General Assembly.”

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor HB 1263 during the committee’s deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or tyler.abbott@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Abbott", with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Tyler Abbott

cc: The Honorable Pat Young
George “Tad” Aburn, Director, Air and Radiation Administration