



Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB525 - Public Utilities - Energy Distribution Planning and Required Labor Standards

Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition

Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 15, 2022

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB525. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB525.

SB525 complements the Public Service Commission's (PSC's) existing Distribution System Planning process. The bill will establish a Distribution System Planning Workgroup to study issues related to energy distribution planning and implementation. In addition, it will require the PSC to adopt regulations related to energy distribution planning and implementation; require the PSC and the Maryland Energy Administration to coordinate with utilities regarding federal infrastructure grid improvement funding; and establish labor standards for contractors and subcontractors in grid modernization projects.

This time is now for Maryland to speed up the pace of its grid modernization, because it is a critical part of the state's strategy to transition to renewable energy, electrify the building and transportation sectors, and to be resilient in the face of a changing climate. Furthermore, workers involved in distribution grid upgrade projects must also reap the benefits of the transition through family-sustaining wages, health and retirement benefits, and apprenticeship programs. The bill includes these provisions, as well as plans to recruit and retain state residents, including returning citizens, women, minority individuals, and veterans, in these important jobs.

SB525 will help Maryland undertake the improvements needed to have a resilient electricity grid that supports rapid electrification, a clean-energy economy, and workers for the future. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.