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Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Testimony on: SB 146 - "Vehicle Laws – Plug-In Electric Drive Vehicles – Reserved Parking Spaces"

Position: Support

Hearing Date: January 18, 2022

The Maryland Sierra Club strongly supports SB 146, which would prohibit a person from stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle that is not a plug-in electric drive vehicle in a designated plug-in electric drive vehicle charging space. The bill also states that a person who violates this restriction may have his or her vehicle ticketed, towed or removed, and be subject to a penalty equal to the penalty issued in that local jurisdiction for the unauthorized use of a space designated for the use of individuals with disabilities.

This is a reasonable proposal that would, if passed, enable more plug-in electric vehicles (EVs) in our state to be used and recharged when parked. Approval of this bill also would have the effect of encouraging more people to purchase, lease, or operate plug-in EVs and would reduce our dependence on petroleum.

Transportation is now the largest contributor to climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions in this country, and is also a major source of toxic emissions including benzene, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxide. Emissions from vehicle tailpipes are hazardous to human health and are linked to various cancers, heart disease, asthma, emphysema and other respiratory diseases. Unlike conventionally-powered combustion engines, plug-in EV require little or no gasoline or diesel and emit little or no air pollution from their tailpipes.

From July 1, 2018 to August 1, 2021, EV ownership in Maryland increased by more than 160 percent, from 13,207 to more than 36,000 registrations, according to the latest Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program. Such growth demonstrates an ever-increasing number of consumers recognize the importance of driving plug-in vehicles. As more coal plants in this country are retired and clean, renewable sources of power are brought online, the emissions from utilities providing electricity that is used to recharge electric vehicles will continue to decline.

In summary, this bill contains a number of reasonable prohibitions and requirements that would encourage more electric car usage in our state, which would lessen air pollution and improve our environment. We urge this committee to issue 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.