

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

TO: Brian Feldman, Chair of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee; and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support SB 781 - Offshore Wind Energy – State Goals and Procurement (Promoting Offshore Wind Energy Resources Act)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 781 offered by Senator Hester. In Maryland, TNC's work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. TNC has an institutional goal to support reducing global emissions by avoiding or sequestering 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by 2030. We are dedicated to creating a future where people and nature thrive together.

TNC views offshore wind as an essential part of reaching state, national, and global low-carbon energy goals and combatting the negative health and climate impacts of fossil fuels. TNC has launched an offshore wind program to help steer this rapidly growing energy sector toward improving siting and advancing marine conservation as multiple large-scale wind projects are proposed up and down the East Coast.

SB 781 sets Maryland's offshore wind production target to 8.5 GW, and requires the Public Service Commission to issue an RFP to identify a plan for transmitting energy from these projects to the onshore grid. The bill also sets a state energy procurement model to protect against ratepayer impact.

According to a recent report by Gabel and Associates, over the life of the project the potential avoided emissions from wind generation includes 361,445,105 tons of carbon dioxide, 120,508 tons of sulfur dioxide, and 128,931 tons of nitrogen oxide. Beyond the health benefits generated by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and being more intentional about transmission infrastructure, this bill will create more family-sustaining jobs through new offshore wind projects and transmission investments. This will enable communities that have been historically excluded from job, housing, and wealth opportunities to build generational wealth.

The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 sets state goals to reduce emissions by 60% by 2031 and reach net-zero by 2045. Governor Moore has set an even more ambitious goal for 100% renewable energy by 2035. These goals are achievable, but only through bold and aggressive action starting today. Renewable energy sources and a clean energy economy are essential parts of reaching state, national, and global low-carbon energy goals and combatting the negative health and environmental impacts caused by fossil fuels.

TNC commends Senator Hester for continuing to raise the bar for Maryland's climate mitigation commitments and advancing climate solutions that will expand our green energy economy.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 781.