

**Thursday February 9, 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; Caitlin Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

**POSITION:** Support SB 224 Department of the Environment - Zero-Emission Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicles - Regulations (Clean Trucks Act of 2023)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 224 offered by Senator Augustine. SB 224 will update Maryland's regulations on medium- and heavy-duty vehicle emissions in order to better protect public health and our environment. This bill is consistent with Maryland's commitments under the Multi-State Medium- and Heavy-Duty Zero Emission Vehicle Memorandum of Understanding as well as with state emissions reduction goals set by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 (CSNA). Furthermore, the Maryland Commission on Climate Change recommends that the state adopt the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule by this year. SB 224 represents a key step in following through on Maryland's commitments to our residents and to other state governments.

The transportation sector is the largest contributor to climate change in our country, our region, and in Maryland. It accounts for approximately 40% of greenhouse gas emissions statewide, predominately from on-road sources. Gas-powered vehicles also emit air pollutants like particulate matter that harm pulmonary and cardiovascular health. Of the particulate matter that diesel-powered vehicles emit, 80%-95% is 'ultrafine' size, which has the ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the circulation system. Nitrogen oxides from fossil fuel combustion, including diesel exhaust, are the major precursors of ground level ozone, which triggers asthma attacks. These dangerous health risks disproportionately impact Black and brown communities and low-income neighborhoods. Nitrogen oxides contribute to increasing new cases of childhood asthma. According to a recent report from the International Council on Clean Transportation, implementing updated emissions regulations for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles through enacting the Advanced Clean Trucks and the Heavy-Duty Omnibus Rules would bring Maryland over \$2.2 billion in public health benefits between 2020-2050, by avoiding over 314 hospital admissions and emergency room visits, 370 premature deaths, and more than 150,000 cases of respiratory illnesses.

Maryland has set ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change through the CSNA of 2022. In 2021, the Maryland Department of the Environment modeled the Multi-State Medium- and Heavy-Duty Zero Emission Vehicle Memorandum of Understanding and determined that this is a critical contribution to achieving even fifty percent reductions by 2030, which is less than CSNA targets. We need to act now in order to meet our state climate goals and SB 224 will bring us closer to reaching these targets.

We commend Senator Augustine on introducing this bill, which would improve public and environmental health in our state by reducing emissions in medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in Maryland.

**Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 224.**