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March 29, 2023

SUPPORT: SB224: Clean Trucks Act of 2023

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV strongly supports SB224: Clean Trucks Act of 2023. This bill, along with its House crossfile (HB230), are top priorities for Maryland LCV, and we thank Senator Augustine and Delegate Love for their leadership on this issue.

In order to confront the growing threat of climate change, and meet the greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals codified in the Climate Solutions Now Act, Maryland must continue to take bold steps to address the pollution coming from the transportation sector, which is the single largest contributor to our GHG emissions. This bill would require all manufacturers that sell medium and heavy-duty trucks and school buses in Maryland to sell an increasing annual percentage of zero-emission trucks and school buses beginning in Model Year 2027 and concluding in 2035.

Maryland LCV is strongly supportive of this legislation, as well as of the urgency expressed by partners, including the Maryland Department of the Environment, to enact this legislation without delay. As passed out of the Senate, SB224 includes amendments that directs a new report be conducted around the feasibility of implementation of the Advanced Clean Truck Rule, and allows the Maryland Department of the Environment to delay implementation following the results of this report. While we are sympathetic to the underlying concerns expressed by the Motor Truck Association and their affiliates, we believe that these amendments are unnecessary. Similar reports are already being conducted as part of the implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act, and the Department already has the authority to delay enforcement, without the included amendment provisions,

That being said, it is important that this legislation pass this year, to provide legislative support behind any administrative decision to sign the state on to the Advanced Clean Truck Rule. With that as the priority, we urge the committee to pass the bill in the strongest possible posture which will allow it to reach the Governor's desk for his signature.

As we stated in previous testimony: moving vehicles away from fossil fuel-reliant technologies and moving to zero-emission electric vehicles (which can be charged with clean, renewable energy) is critical to this effort. Nationwide, trucks account for 10% of vehicles on the road, but contribute 30% of GHG emissions and 57% of particulate matter (PM2.5) emitted. People who are heavily exposed to PM2.5 and other toxic truck emissions like nitrogen oxides are at greater risk for developing asthma and many lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lung cancer.

Low income communities and communities of color disproportionately suffer the impacts of this diesel pollution. Maryland LCV is especially invested in the inclusion of electric school buses in this legislation. Every day over 650,000 children in Maryland ride to school on one of the State's approximately 7,200 diesel school buses. Every year, school buses in Maryland travel more than 128 million miles. Studies have shown that diesel pollutants concentrate inside a bus cabin, increasing children's exposure. A child riding inside of a diesel school bus may be exposed to as much as 15 times the level of toxic diesel exhaust as someone riding in a car.

Diesel emissions are filled with carcinogens, particulate matter and soot that increases lifetime risk of cancer, incidents of asthma and heart disease. These effects are particularly dangerous for children because their lungs, heart, and other organs are still developing. Children riding in zero-emission buses have reduced exposure to air pollution, less pulmonary inflammation, more rapid lung growth over time and lower absenteeism compared to children riding in diesel buses, particularly those with asthma. In Maryland, approximately one in ten children suffer from asthma, and this rate is higher among minority groups. Asthma is a leading chronic illness among children in the United States, and it is also one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. In Maryland, 19.2 percent of parents reported that their child missed 1-2 days of school because of asthma and 9.7 percent said their child missed over seven days due to asthma.

Here in Maryland, several school districts already have electric school buses in their fleets, and this number is growing. Recent innovations, such as vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology, coupled with the lower costs of operating and maintaining electric buses, have made them financially attractive for schools.

The Clean Trucks Act of 2023 will bring cleaner air to impacted communities while bringing zero-emission trucks and buses to scale in Maryland.

Maryland LCV strongly urges a favorable report on SB224.