



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

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HB 147 - Environment - Climate Crisis Plan - Requirement House Environment and Transportation Committee February 8, 2023

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

**Donna S. Edwards
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Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 147 with amendments. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

HB 147 requires counties to create climate crisis plans and submit them to the state for review and feedback. As the impacts of climate change become more visible in our everyday lives, it is important that the state starts to plan concretely for how we will adapt. New energy production, electric grid expansion, energy efficiency retrofits, and rising seawater mitigation will all be massive undertakings that have to occur with coordination on the state and local level. Over the last few years, Maryland passed legislation with substantial goals for greenhouse gas reduction and new energy production standards, but these bills did not include details on the steps required for achieving those goals. HB 147 helps make those goals possible by requiring counties to take on some of the planning responsibilities.

We believe that HB 147 can be improved by requiring counties to also consider the impacts that a transition to a green economy will have on workers and good paying jobs. If we are not careful, state and local funding to implement climate crisis plans could accidentally undermine existing good jobs and create entirely new industries with low pay and limited benefits. This approach will make our transition to a fossil free economy even harder. Low paying jobs result in families requiring additional support from the state in the form of Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) grants and other financial assistance. State subsidies that could be going to directly assist in green energy creation will end up getting used to subsidize energy bills of underpaid workers. Countless Federal programs created under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act contain provisions that require compliance with prevailing wage standards, "Buy America" provisions, and union consultation. Climate crisis plans might be undermining their own abilities to implement the plans they are tasked with drafting if they don't incorporate information on their impact on the creation and preservation of good jobs.

We encourage the committee to amend HB 147 to include the following:

Add a new paragraph with the following text to page 4, between line 7 and 8:

“(XVIII) Impacts on the preservation or creation of new good jobs. Good jobs are defined as employment paying at least 150% of the state minimum wage, providing career advancement training, affording employees the right to bargain collectively for wages and benefits, providing paid leave, being considered covered employment for the purposes of unemployment insurance benefits in accordance with Title 8 of the Labor and Employment Article, being compliant with Federal and State Wage and Hour Laws for the previous 3 years, offering employer-provided health insurance benefits with monthly premiums that do not exceed 8.5% of the employees net monthly earnings, and offering retirement benefits.

We also urge the committee to strike Subsection IV under the minimum plan requirements (i.e. “Reducing and eliminating the use of fossil fuels in the design of new buildings in the county;”) because the counties have not had the time to study its impact on the electrical grid. Some estimates state that full electrification for heating, cooking, and transportation would require triple the grid infrastructure currently in place by 2050.¹ County level climate plans should leave these requirements out until relevant conversations can take place at the federal and state level.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 147 after accepting the amendments.

¹<https://www.princeton.edu/news/2020/12/15/big-affordable-effort-needed-america-reach-net-zero-emissions-2050-princeton-study>