



February 22, 2023

SUPPORT HB261: Public Projects - Global Warming Potential of Materials

Mme. Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland League of Conservation Voters and the Sierra Club of Maryland support HB261, “Public Projects - Global Warming Potential of Materials,” and we thank Delegate Kerr for his leadership on this issue. The bill will require the Department of General Services to limit the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from any cement or concrete mixture used in certain public projects by establishing a “maximum global warming potential” for such products.

In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Climate Solutions Now Act, which sets the State on a path toward dramatically reducing our carbon emissions by the year 2031, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2045. To reach these ambitious but achievable goals, Maryland must take every opportunity to cut our greenhouse gas emissions. HB261 is a meaningful step toward this goal.

Cement contributes up to 8% of greenhouse gases worldwide. Emissions are tied to the presence of “clinker,” which is a key component of traditional cement-making, and emits the largest amount of CO₂ in the cement-making process. While the United States is a relatively small part of the cement market, one of the nation’s largest producers has a plant in Hagerstown, Maryland – a plant which is leading the way in adopting alternative cement-making practices that significantly reduce carbon emissions, by using an alternative to the carbon-heavy “clinker,” and more energy efficient processes.

HB261 offers the Maryland General Assembly the opportunity to put our state government in a position of leading the way for private companies by giving preference to these improved practices. This will achieve two critical outcomes: supporting a Maryland business that has shown important industry leadership; and reducing carbon emissions from public projects. Moreover, this bill would also bring environmental and health benefits to local communities that host concrete manufacturing plants by supporting alternatives that reduce other emissions during the production cycle.

Communities with cement manufacturing plants are not only overburdened by the harmful emissions released during the industrial process of producing concrete, but their residents also suffer from diesel emissions, and noise and public safety concerns associated with the heavy diesel trucks that serve concrete operations daily. While legislation is pending which would help to transition the fleet of medium and heavy duty trucks to zero-emission electric vehicles, this process will take time, and this pollution will remain a concern for these communities. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to take these cumulative impacts into account to ensure that no community in Maryland is disproportionately impacted by pollution and other environmental harms.

We urge a favorable report on HB261.