



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1077
(OFFICE OF SMALL, MINORITY, AND WOMEN BUSINESS AFFAIRS - SMALL BUSINESSES
CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATOR - ESTABLISHMENT)

Delegate Sheila Ruth
March 6, 2024

Climate change is no longer a distant looming threat: it is impacting all of us right now, including our small businesses. All levels of government, including Maryland's General Assembly, have passed and will continue to pass legislation to mitigate the climate crisis by both reducing our use of fossil fuels and to address its consequences, including extreme weather which can cause, among many other things, devastating flooding for a coastal state like Maryland. This collaborative work creates helpful opportunities for businesses - particularly financial assistance programs and business opportunities in the burgeoning clean energy field - as well as regulations they must comply with that can be complex.

Large businesses can easily hire dedicated staff to keep track of both new government regulations *and* assistance programs. Small businesses often don't have that same luxury and lack the resources to know how new regulations will affect them, which ones they need to comply with, and that assistance may be available to them at all, let alone what kinds or how to receive it.

HB1077 aims to remedy this by establishing a new Small Business Climate Change Coordinator position in the Executive Department's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs which would work in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Emergency Management's Office of Resilience to assist small, minority, and women-owned businesses in navigating issues created by and relating to the climate crisis and our transition to an advanced clean energy economy, by conducting research and focus groups to identify the best ways to mitigate the effects of climate change on small businesses and to provide education - either directly or through other organizations - to those businesses about financial and technical assistance that might be available from federal, state, and local government, nonprofits, or the private sector, as well as new opportunities provided by an advanced clean energy economy. As an example, small businesses wishing to install electric vehicle chargers may not even be aware that there are various programs available to provide grants, rebates, or tax credits for their installation, let alone have the time and resources to research the requirements, deadlines, and available amounts.

HB1077 does not create any new programs or financial assistance, but rather focuses on helping small businesses navigate the many already existing government programs and regulations. It also ensures the Governor, Special Secretary of the Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs, and the General Assembly will have - in the new coordinator - a point person to advise them on matters related to the impact of climate change and the State's transition to an advanced clean energy economy on small businesses.

As we try to best handle this crisis together, we need to make sure that small businesses are not left behind. I ask for a favorable report for HB1077.