

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB 1199 – Study on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Economy Wide Cap and Invest Program – Maryland Climate Crisis Equity Act

Dear Chair Korman,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is honored to express strong support for House Bill 1199, the Maryland Climate Crisis Equity Act. This legislation requires the Maryland Department of the Environment, in coordination with relevant State agencies, to conduct a comprehensive study on the feasibility, structure, and projected impacts of an economy wide cap and invest program designed to help Maryland meet its greenhouse gas reduction mandates while centering equity and community investment.

Maryland has committed to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045 under the Climate Solutions Now Act. Achieving that target requires durable market based mechanisms capable of reducing emissions across multiple sectors while generating predictable revenue for reinvestment. A cap and invest framework establishes a declining emissions cap and requires covered entities to obtain allowances, creating both accountability and funding for public benefit investments.

Climate policy is inseparable from public health policy. According to the Maryland Department of Health, asthma prevalence remains higher in urban and industrial corridor communities where air quality burdens are concentrated. Latino families are disproportionately represented in frontline occupations such as construction, food service, landscaping, and warehouse logistics, which increase exposure to heat stress and air pollution. Maryland's Hispanic population represents more than 13 percent of the state's total population, and foreign born residents represent nearly 17 percent. These communities often reside in areas with higher traffic density and industrial emissions, compounding environmental exposure.

A carefully studied cap and invest program offers Maryland the opportunity to reduce emissions while directing revenue toward energy affordability, housing retrofits, transit access, and climate resilience in overburdened neighborhoods. The equity design component is essential. Without intentional structuring, climate programs can unintentionally raise household energy costs. HB 1199 ensures that Maryland evaluates consumer protections, revenue recycling strategies, and community investment formulas before implementation.

Implications for Latino and immigrant Marylanders

This bill advances environmental justice by requiring that policy design consider cumulative burdens and historical inequities. For Latino families facing high utility costs and disproportionate pollution exposure, equitable climate investment can reduce energy burdens, improve indoor air quality, and protect workers from extreme heat risks. MLU can support stakeholder engagement by elevating community voices in the study process, ensuring that policy modeling reflects lived experience and not solely aggregate data.

HB 1199 positions Maryland to design a climate strategy that is both economically sound and socially just. MLU respectfully urges the Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

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