

**Written Testimony in Support of  
Utility Regulation - Consideration of Climate and Labor (SB 656)  
Senate Finance Committee | February 25, 2020**

We, the undersigned groups, write in support of legislation requiring the Public Service Commission (PSC) to implement a “climate test” during its decision-making processes.

The world’s leading climate scientists warn that we have 10 short years to dramatically reduce our climate-disrupting emissions. The State of Maryland has made commitments to reducing climate change, starting with a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030--a target the General Assembly is considering increasing this year. To reach these goals, Maryland’s administrative agencies must also factor climate into their decision-making process. This consideration is especially important for Maryland’s Public Service Commission, which approves all large facilities that generate electricity and oversees gas utility companies.

Notwithstanding Maryland’s climate commitments and the significant amount of greenhouse gases the State’s electricity generators emit, the PSC currently does not consider climate in its decision-making process. This was confirmed last year when the PSC approved a former coal plant repowering to gas. In dismissing an appeal of the PSC’s decision to approve the repowered facility, brought in part on climate grounds, the PSC stated that its governing statute “does not specifically or generally require considerations regarding climate change.” The PSC staff agreed, writing in its brief that “the Commission has never required that any consideration of climate change and its effects be included in a Proposed Order or CPCN proceeding . . . . Staff is bound by Commission precedent.”

In a world that is both literally and metaphorically on fire, state agencies should climate change and it makes no sense for the PSC – a core part of state government and the principal regulator of electricity in Maryland – to not take into consideration the State’s own climate commitments.

In order to ensure proper consideration of Maryland’s climate commitments, the PSC must:

- Consider climate change in its regulation of the electricity sector, based upon the best available scientific information recognized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and achieving our state climate goals.
- Consider climate impacts when reviewing applications for electricity generating facilities, and when it approves the sites for new facilities.

Additionally, state agencies must address the climate impacts of proposed power plants (based upon the best available scientific information recognized by the IPCC) when providing input to the PSC regarding applications for new facilities.

This “climate test” provides a necessary and straightforward solution to the current significant flaw in Maryland’s climate efforts due to the PSC not considering climate change when making energy-related decisions.

For these reasons we, the undersigned organizations, urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 656

Signed:

350 Baltimore

350 Montgomery County

Allegheny County Women's Action Coalition

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The  
United Methodist Church

Bay Hundred Citizens for a Just Society

Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community

CCAN Action Fund

Cedar Haven Civic Association on the Patuxent  
River, Inc.

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Chapman Forest Foundation

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Citizens Advancing Renewable Energy Sources

Clean Air Prince George's

Climate Law & Policy Project

Earth Forum of Howard county

Eastern Panhandle Green Coalition

Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Laurel

Environmental Justice Ministry

Food & Water Action

Frack-Free Frostburg

Friends Meeting of Washington Committee on  
Peace & Social Concerns

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

Harford County Climate Action

Howard County Climate Action

Indivisible Howard County

Institute for Energy and Environmental Research

Interfaith Power & Light DC

Interfaith Power & Light NoVA

Interfaith Power & Lights MD

Jefferson County Vision

League of Women Voters of Maryland

Maryland League of Conservation Voters

Maryland Legislative Coalition

Mattawoman Watershed Society

Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate  
Solutions

Mountainside Education and Enrichment, Inc.  
Neighborhood Sun

New Baltimore Green Forum

Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Our Revolution Baltimore

Patuxent Riverkeeper

River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Safe Skies Maryland

Sierra Club Maryland

St. Matthew Catholic Church and Blessed

Sacrament Catholic Church

Sunrise Movement Baltimore

Sunrise Movement Howard County

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment  
Committee

The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy network

Transition Howard County

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of  
Maryland

Western Maryland Green New Deal

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