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**Committee: Economic Matters**

**Testimony on: HB1048 – “Investor-Owned Utilities – Prevailing Wage”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: March 9, 2020**

The Maryland Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB1048. This legislation would ensure that individuals who work on our important underground electric and gas infrastructure are compensated fairly. Specifically, the bill would require investor-owned utilities to mandate their contractors and sub-contractors to pay these workers not less than the applicable prevailing wage.

The Sierra Club, nationally and in Maryland, is committed to the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion, and to fighting for placing these principles at the center of environmental initiatives. These principles include respecting and supporting the rights of workers, which includes their ability to have good jobs, earn a decent living, and enjoy occupational health and safety protections.

This commitment is reflected in our priority legislation this session (HB1545) to transition Maryland off its reliance on coal-burning power plants. A critical component of the bill is the establishment of a coal workforce and community transition account to support impacted workers and communities. The fund would be governed by its stakeholders, and would support paid worker retraining; financial compensation for impacted workers; investment in climate action projects in impacted communities; site deactivation, reuse, and remediation projects that hire from the high-quality workforce now employed at the coal plants; and compensation for a portion of lost local property tax revenues.

Last session, the Maryland Sierra Club prioritized passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, which will support significant increases in wind and solar energy in Maryland, and, as well, training programs for growing our clean energy workforce.

HB1048 is a straightforward way in which Maryland should support its energy workforce. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.