

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB0066 “Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 18, 2021

We, the students of the Climate Change Institute, strongly support and request a favorable report on HB0066, the Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021.

Every year, it is becoming more and more clear that climate change is the sole biggest threat to the Earth, and especially to the citizens of Maryland. It is becoming increasingly obvious that we must implement any feasible action that, as long as it does not impose undue suffering, reaps positive effects for the environment and to our citizens. The Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021 does just this by establishing a clear, managed transition period off of Maryland’s coal-fired power plants. It not only addresses, but actively promotes the needs of workers, by setting up a Fossil Fuel Transition Account which would help workers who face layoffs in the face of coal facility closures. It ensures that Maryland is in line with international timetables to slow the progress of climate change and the devastation it wrecks upon our community. Make no mistake: this transition is inevitable; nearly 300 coal plants across America have announced plans to retire, and five out of six of Maryland’s coal plants have done the same. This Act serves to ensure that these retirement dates are imposed, it provides protections for impacted workers, and it sets a precedent for other communities that such environmentally-harmful plants can not be allowed to pollute any longer.

Coal is by far the dirtiest fuel, and coal-burning facilities have enormous and disastrous consequences upon the lives of our citizens. They are a major source of smog-forming pollution, which aggravates respiratory issues on the worst-off in our community. They lead to toxic water pollution, discharging arsenic, mercury, and selenium, which in turn cause cancer, impair brain development, and damage the nervous system. They pollute our waterways and damage our prized Chesapeake Bay, which provides water and jobs that boost Maryland’s economy. They most certainly do not meet EPA healthy air standards, and make life miserable for the tens of thousands of people living in Maryland with asthma or other health conditions. If we allow such detrimental facilities to continue, we are sending a message that the thousands who are negatively affected have no choice but to suffer, and that climate change, which threatens every human being upon this Earth, need not be addressed.

We, in the Climate Change Institute, are high schoolers around the Howard County area. It is us who will be the most negatively impacted by the continuation of these facilities. Climate change is not a far-flung threat that can be easily mitigated; it is perhaps the biggest threat in human existence, and especially to our generation. If we do not address these sources now, my generation will suffer the consequences. We can not let progress in mitigating climate change be

stopped because of a fear of change: we must act now, act urgently, act thoroughly to eliminate the worst pollutant in our community. This Act does more than that, not only addressing climate change but the needs of any impacted workers. For the above reasoning, please provide a favorable report on HB0066.

Sincerely,

Evan Borodin, writing for the students at the Climate Change Institute