



HB66 – Electric Generation – Transition From Fossil Fuels – Carbon Dioxide Emissions Rate and Transition Plan and Fund (Maryland Coal Community Transition Act of 2021)

Testimony before House Economic Matters Committee

February 18, 2021

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Richard Deutschmann, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in support of HB66, to implement a timeline for phasing out of the state's coal-fired power plant fleet, while providing for a just transition for the affected workers. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members).

The world's leading climate scientists warn that we have 10 short years to dramatically reduce our climate-disrupting emissions. The Hill reports that more than 300 coal-fired power plants have shut down in the U.S., with this trend continuing during the previous, pro-coal administration. And the Union of Concerned Scientists has stated what nearly all climate scientists know – that the burning of coal is one of the worst offenders in directly causing global climate change, while also contributing mightily to air and water pollution and the associated public health impacts. It is clear that halting the burning of coal for our electrical power needs has to stop NOW, especially when cleaner, cheaper alternatives are available.



HB66 does just that, setting a firm retirement date for the remaining operational coal-fired power plants in Maryland. Most of this has already been accomplished, as the owners of the plants themselves have announced retirements before 2030. But it also does something else critical for this global change, and provides for a just transition for the fossil fuel workers who in some cases have been working at these plants for decades. The fossil industry helped fuel the industrial revolution and brought great wealth to this country. We need to recognize these workers and their communities, and ensure they continue to thrive in the transition to a clean energy economy.

Passage of this bill will also have numerous public health benefits. The burning of coal has well-known detrimental impacts to our air and water, including the emission of mercury, lead,

sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxides and particulates into our air, and acid drainage from coal mines and other water pollution from toxic coal ash ponds. The impacts include nearly all Marylanders living in an EPA non-attainment area for air quality, and high rates of asthma and other deadly lung diseases. These affects are disproportionately felt by our economically disadvantaged areas of the state. Cleaning up this air and water pollution will have profound positive health impacts for our children and future generations, and will reduce health care costs across the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We strongly urge a favorable report.

Richard Deutschmann
Columbia, MD 21045