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The Honorable Paul Pinsky  
Chair, Committee on Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs  
(EHEA)  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB0414, Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the EHEA Committee,

On behalf of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a non-profit organization with nearly 9,000 member companies nationwide, and our strong community in Maryland, I respectfully offer our comments in strong support of SB0414, the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021. As a Montgomery County, Maryland resident and a proud public school parent, I appreciate your consideration of the following remarks.

USGBC is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to transforming the way buildings and communities are designed, built, and operated in order to enable a more environmentally and socially responsible, healthy, and prosperous world. USGBC is perhaps best known for our LEED green building certification system, though we also actively advocate for the advancement of high-performing, cost-effective, and resilient buildings – including schools – that save resources and money. A core area of our work is green schools, particularly public schools that are well-designed, constructed, maintained, and operated to facilitate learning, health and wellness, and decrease operating budgets through reduced utility costs.

LEED certified buildings can support climate mitigation through reduced reliance on resources, a smaller carbon footprint, and a consideration of lifecycle impacts of building materials. In fact, more than a third of the total points available in LEED v4 [address](#) climate change – more than any other outcome. For more on how LEED works to mitigate climate change, see our LEED and Climate Mitigation [brief](#).

USGBC supports Senate Bill 414 (SB0414) that will put Maryland on track to cut state greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent by 2030 and to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. In order to reach these ambitious targets, the bill would mandate state-funded buildings – except for schools, buildings that receive at least 25 percent of their funding from the state -- to be net zero energy. SB0414 would also require at least one school built in each district between now and 2030 to be net zero energy and for all other schools to be solar-ready. Critically, the bill provides for supplemental funding to enable net zero energy schools.

We applaud the sponsors for recognizing and reaffirming the importance of state buildings to be high-performing green buildings, and for layering the net zero energy performance as a required outcome of such buildings, in order to make progress on Maryland's climate goals. USGBC supports the inclusion of the LEED Zero program in the bill, providing added value through third-party verification of a state net zero energy building. We note that the LEED Zero program includes four discrete certifications: Energy, Carbon, Waste, and Water; from our read of the bill, it intends to reference LEED Zero Energy.

USGBC also recommends amending the language in the bill that references LEED certification in the context of the defining "high-performance buildings." Specifically, we advise that the language on page 29, line 1-3 to read as follows: "(l) 1. earns a minimum of Silver certification under the current version of the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system;". This change clarifies the law to be consistent with the current Maryland Green Building Council High Performance Green Building Program.

USGBC also supports the provisions of SB0414 requiring all commercial and residential buildings larger than 25,000 square feet to achieve high levels of energy efficiency, with those built after 2030 to be net zero energy. USGBC backs the bill's proposal to allow local jurisdictions to enact more stringent efficiency standards under the bill, and to require energy lifecycle cost estimates for new buildings.

Maryland is at a critical crossroads in addressing climate change, and USGBC commends the committee for taking up this essential legislation. By ensuring high levels of building performance, Maryland can ensure that it is well positioned to combat one of the greatest challenges of our time, climate change.

USGBC urges the swift passage of SB0414 with minor amendments and we offer our expertise in this area if needed.

Sincerely,



Alysson Blackwelder  
Project Manager, Advocacy and Policy  
U.S. Green Building Council  
Bethesda, Maryland Resident

