

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB 630 - "Primary and Secondary Education – School District Energy Use"

Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer

Position: Favorable, With Amendment

Hearing Date: March 25, 2021

Climate Parents of Prince George's supports HB 630, with amendment, "Primary and Secondary Education – School District Energy Use – Policy and Study."

There is a play on an old saw, the best time to start collecting data is twenty years ago, the second best time is now. Unfortunately, most Maryland school systems did not start collecting energy use data twenty years and need to start now. If we are looking back twenty years from now and our school systems did not collect energy data and have robust energy policies in place then we will have spent that time wasting energy, harming the climate, and using taxpayer funds unwisely.

Data collection on energy consumption by schools is vital. Schools systems themselves stand to benefit directly from this data collection. For instance, if a school system finds that a particular school is far more inefficient in terms of energy consumption than others, priority can be given to rebuilding or retrofitting that particular building over others so as to save the school system and taxpayers money.

Additionally, companies called Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) are becoming more sophisticated and have now developed advanced energy data collection sensor systems that can collect this data and then analyze it to prioritize energy saving measures. Partnerships with ESCOs can even lead to smart financing opportunities for school systems that need upfront monies for energy improvements. One particular school system, Hillsborough County, Florida (the 8th largest system in the nation) now saves over \$1 million dollars annually from partnering with an ESCO to reduce energy consumption. Maryland schools should be realizing these savings too.

School systems are one of the largest energy consumers in the public sector. Prince George's County alone has 208 educational facilities that are all consuming energy. The state of Maryland cannot meet its renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions goals without tackling energy consumption in schools. In order to accomplish this, school systems must set specific goals and track progress. Also, if goals are not in place there is no way for school administrators, buildings personnel, legislators, regulators, or the public at large to know if they are on track.

Requested Amendment:

It is important to amend the bill to require reporting and consideration of onsite fossil fuel consumption, not just electricity use. Energy use and electricity use are not 100% equivalent. In particular, indoor air heating systems, water heating equipment, and food preparation equipment often rely on natural gas, or oil in the case of heating. Also, schools have diesel or natural gas powered generators for back-up power. Use of this equipment results in the consumption of greenhouse gas producing energy and needs to be part of a holistic building energy plan. (B)(2)(iv) should be added to require a breakdown of building fossil fuel by type of fuel and purpose of the burning of the fossil fuel.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report WITH AMENDMENT for this important legislation.