



TESTIMONY FOR HB0583 CLIMATE SOLUTIONS NOW ACT

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Stein

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0583 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

This past year, the Maryland Legislative Coalition created a new subgroup specifically to support environmental legislation in the state. We started with member groups of the Coalition but through word of mouth, we connected with over 50 new groups. That is how passionate Marylanders are about the environment.

We all are enthusiastic about this bill. It is a comprehensive attack on the climate crisis and a recognition that we must have a multi-pronged approach if we are to truly get to net zero emissions. However, the aspects of the bill that most impressed us are those that deal specifically with climate justice.

This bill tasks the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities to identify communities disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis and set a percentage of state funds spent on climate that must be spent in those communities.

It also convenes a new Work Group that will include labor, legislators, the Secretary of Labor's office, climate groups, and renewable energy companies to make policy recommendations for how to best serve fossil fuel workers in Maryland.

It requires the planting of five million trees between 2022 and 2030. Five hundred thousand of those trees will be planted in urban areas that have been historically redlined or are economically disadvantaged. A work group will target the best locations for tree plantings to maximize environmental benefits and determine the best way to leverage private funding. Also, a grant program will be created to fund community groups planting trees in underserved urban areas through the Chesapeake Bay Trust.

Even in the area of solar, there are benefits for marginalized communities. Any community solar projects on rooftops, parking lots, or brownfields that primarily benefit low-income households are exempted from personal property tax.

Maryland needs to do this. For the environment, but also to recognize the harm that some of our communities have suffered and try to ensure that they directly benefit from the transition to a more green, healthier way of life.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.