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Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB592 - "State Vehicle Fleet – Conversion to Zero-Emission Electric Vehicles"

Position: Support with Amendment

Hearing Date: February 11, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of Sierra Club supports HB592 that would prohibit a State unit from entering into a contract to purchase or lease vehicles for the State vehicle fleet that are not zero-emission electric vehicles beginning in fiscal year 2023.

The transportation sector is Maryland's number one generator of climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions. Our state's Greenhouse Gas Inventory indicates that gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles account for 89% of this pollution. Tailpipe emissions from these vehicles also are hazardous to human health and contribute to cancers, heart disease, asthma, emphysema, and other respiratory diseases. More than 80% of Marylanders live in counties that do not meet federal clean air standards for ozone, due in significant part to tailpipe emissions.

In 2013, Maryland joined seven other states in signing a memorandum of understanding committing to have 300,000 zero-emission vehicles (including plug-ins) on the road by 2025, and 600,000 EVs on the road by 2030. The state also has a goal it set for itself in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act to reduce state greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 (compared to the 2006 level). This bill would significantly increase the likelihood the state will be able to meet those goals.

We have one amendment to propose for this bill which is intended only to make clear that this bill is aimed at requiring a State unit to purchase or lease STANDARD PASSENGER SEDANS for the state vehicle fleet that are zero emission electric vehicles. The current wording of the bill is so broad that it would mandate all vehicles purchased or leased for the state fleet beginning in fiscal year 2023 be zero-emission electric, but that is not possible because the state vehicle fleet includes medium and heavy-duty trucks, vans, and other motor vehicles that are not yet available as zero-emission electric.

In summary, converting the state fleet of standard passenger sedans to zero-emission electric vehicles is necessary to meet our climate targets and protect public health. This bill would also generate savings for the state over time because zero-emission electric vehicles have much lower fuel and maintenance costs than gas and diesel-powered vehicles. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.