

Climate Change Solutions Now Act of 2021

Support

Dear Chairman Barve and members of the Environmental and Transportation Committee,

The Climate Change Working Group of Frederick County (CCWG) strongly supports the passage of the Climate Solutions Now Act, SB414 as passed by the Senate. CCWG is a group of knowledgeable citizens working to prepare Frederick County and its citizens to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of our planet's climate crisis through responsible planning, education and advocacy.

This bill provides both the impetus and the support to bring Maryland to the forefront of efforts to prevent the catastrophic consequences of climate change. The bill's provisions for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, mandates for high performance and solar-ready commercial and residential buildings and schools, attention to righting past environmental justice wrongs and investing in overburdened communities in the future, transitioning the state fleet of passenger cars and buses to zero emissions in 10 years, and enhancement of CREP and regenerative agricultural opportunities for landowners are all powerful and positive initiatives to slow and perhaps eventually reverse the unrelenting warming of the planet.

It is the provision for the planting of 5 million trees by 2030 that we most applaud. The bill calls for trees to be planted in both urban and rural areas, with 10% of the total number planted in underserved or overburdened communities. Funding for the effort would come from the Bay Restoration Fund to CBT, DNR's Coastal Bay program, and MDA through the CREP program. CREP funds are largely federal money, giving Maryland a big bang for its tree-planting buck.

While trees are arguably most effective at filtering stormwater, providing wildlife habitat, cooling soils and sequestering carbon when they are planted in contiguous blocks and left alone to become mature forests, the significant health and community benefits of urban tree planting are undeniable. Trees in urban areas have been linked not only to reductions in the heat island effect and energy consumption, but to reduced human stress levels, higher infant birth weights, increased exercise rates due to neighborhood walkability, reduced loneliness and increased social connectivity.^(cited in 1) Research indicates US costs for healthcare far outweigh the direct economic cost of crime, the total cost of residential heating and cooling, and the sewer-service charges for clean water.¹ Even moderate reductions in healthcare costs would result in savings, particularly in poor and underserved communities where economic deprivation is strongly related to poorer health.²

It is crucial that tree planting efforts funded under this bill: 1) create a vested interest in the success of planted tree projects by involving on-site community groups in their planning, marketing and implementation; 2) provide not only for initial planting but follow-up maintenance for three to five years, including possible protective fencing, post-planting watering, weed control, and supporting community monitors; and 3) involve children in the effort.

We have seen the effects of global climate change multiply – the highest annual temperatures, the worst wildfire season ever, the increasing disjunction of plant phenology with that of pollinators, the fiercest ever Atlantic hurricane season, Chesapeake Bay islands and downtown infrastructure alike lost to flooding – the list goes on. CONCRETE, SERIOUS ACTION TO COMBAT A CLIMATE CATASTROPHE CANNOT BE DELAYED. **The Climate**

Solutions Now Act goes a long way to shouldering Maryland's responsibility in this effort and taking action. CCWG strongly supports its passage.

Respectfully,

Kerrie L. Kyde
Dickerson, MD
Executive Committee Member of CCWG



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1. Donovan, G. 2017. Including public-health benefits of trees in urban forestry decision-making. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening* 22, 120-123.
 2. Hystad, P. et al. 2014. Residential greenness and birth outcomes: evaluating the influence of spacially correlated built-environmental factors. *Env. Health Persp.* V 122 (10)