



**Committee:** Economic Matters

**Testimony on:** HB0298 - “Utility Regulation-Consideration of Climate and Labor

**Organization:** MLC Climate Justice Wing

**Person**

**Submitting:** Diana Younts, co-chair

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** January 21, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0298. MLC’s Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and grasstops organizations focused on getting State level climate justice legislation passed. Each bill for which we advocate is evaluated through an equity lens, with a particular focus on how disadvantaged communities are affected by the bill and the bill’s climate impact.

We are testifying today to urge you to vote favorably for HB0298. The bill would require the Public Service Commission (PSC) to include climate change as one of the several factors it considers in regulating Maryland electricity generation, and Maryland electricity and gas service companies. The PSC is interpreting its governing statute to not allow for consideration of climate change as an independent factor. Thus, the PSC is effectively ignoring the climate commitments enacted by the General Assembly in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, notwithstanding that the PSC plays a major role in regulating the state’s greenhouse gas emissions. The General Assembly should amend the PSC’s governing statute to correct this significant gap in the state’s implementation of its climate change commitments.

**Climate & Labor Benefits:** The bill would require the PSC to include climate change as a consideration in all its regulatory activities. The bill does this by clarifying current law which specifies that the PSC has an overall statutory duty to “consider . . . the preservation of environmental quality.” The bill adds that this duty includes “protection of the global climate from continued short-term and long-term warming.” Additionally, the bill would require the

PSC, as a general matter, to consider “the maintenance of fair and stable labor standards for affected workers” in its regulatory activities.

Maryland legislators, at the urging of their constituents, have committed in law to specific targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. House Bill 298 would provide a necessary solution to the PSC’s current limitations on considering climate change. By requiring input from agencies with expertise in long-term planning and evaluating climate change, it creates an effective and straightforward process to bring the PSC in line with the rest of the state’s climate commitments.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for HB0298.