



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

Testimony in SUPPORT of – H.B.583, *Climate Solutions Now Act*

Hearing Date: February 11, 2021

Bill Sponsor: Del. Dana Stein

Committee: Environment and Transportation and Economic Matters

Submitting: Howard County Climate Action

Position: Favorable

[HoCo Climate Action](#) -- a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing more than 1,450 subscribers, and a member of the Howard County Climate Collaboration -- supports H.B.583, the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021.

We have been educating ourselves and others in Howard County about the climate crisis for more than 13 years. We have supported climate change legislation at the county, state and federal level with varying degrees of success during this time, often in collaboration with larger coalitions of county and statewide partners. We are excited about the bold commitments in this bill to reduce climate emissions.

Recent state administrations have passed legislation to bring Maryland forward as a climate leader. We saw the disaster fracking has been in Pennsylvania and other states, and we banned it here. But we cannot stop making dramatic improvements. We see our shorelines on the Eastern Shore disappearing and our major cities increasingly unable to handle flooding (Baltimore, Ellicott City, Annapolis and more). Maryland has much at stake, with nuisance flooding, heatwaves and storm surges already regular occurrences. The stronger, unprecedented storms and weather challenge our farmers, our city dwellers, our transportations systems and all our citizens.

Everyone is concerned about health in the era of covid. We know that those who live in areas of high air pollution are more at risk in normal times to asthma, heart disease and other conditions that affect their well-being and lifespan. But in the era of covid, toxins in the air make people more susceptible to disease and possible death from this modern plague.

We have the responsibility to use the available tools, resources and knowledge to take action right now.

This bill would make a Maryland a leader in climate action by:

- **Ensuring Maryland is in line with the current climate science.** The bill commits us to a 60% reduction in carbon emissions below 2006 levels by 2030 and to reaching net zero emissions by 2045
- **Embracing climate justice.** The bill mandates that a percentage of climate spending must go to communities hit hardest by climate change.
- **Ensuring that labor voices are represented in our planning process** and that jobs benefit those who need them most
- **Taking several immediate steps to reduce emissions**, such as planting 5 million native trees by 2030 and electrifying state vehicles. In addition, buildings that receive at least 25% of their funding

from the state must be net zero, with some exceptions for schools, and mandating energy efficiency increases.

The funding provisions of this bill make sense to us. The Strategic Energy Investment Fund will be used, but the bill does not take away from existing SEIF funding percentages. It only uses funds that are above and beyond the usual annual budget for SEIF. Also, the Bay Restoration Fund will be used to enhance existing Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture programs and to create a new Urban Tree Planting program

International experts have urged action on climate with increasing fervor in recent years for good reason: The consequences of staying the course are dangerous. We have an opportunity to heed the warnings of scientists now while signaling to the nation that Maryland is ready to embrace a climate-friendly economy. We can no longer delay meaningful climate action.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this essential legislation.

HoCo Climate Action

HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com -

Submitted by Ruth White, Steering and Advocacy Committee, Columbia MD

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