



AIA
Maryland

Promoting Maryland Architecture Since 1965

8 February 2021

Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB 0583
Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021

Dear Delegate Barve:

On behalf of AIA Maryland and the nearly 2,000 Architects we represent, we ask for your support of the Climate Solutions Now act of 2021. With 40% of US energy consumed by buildings, architects play a key role in helping us significantly reduce CO2 emissions. Since 2009 many architects have opted into an AIA 2030 challenge, a program focused on tracking baseline and predicted energy use, aimed at moving us toward net zero carbon emissions by 2030. This bill not only helps Maryland funded projects to lead by example, pushing state funded projects to be net zero and solar ready, but it also moves the energy conservation requirements for the state to take all new commercial projects toward net zero energy by 2033 by pushing us a little ahead of building code regulations.

We are particularly pleased with the broad perspective of the Climate Solutions Now Act, impacting interconnected issues of health, our natural environments, transportation, site development and buildings. All these elements contribute to the health and well-being of Maryland residents and when looked at broadly like this, they may collectively have a much greater impact than incremental changes that impact singular components that contribute to climate change.

With this bill, the publicly funded projects move significantly forward in reducing long term operational costs for energy. In the next 8 years, at least one new school in every jurisdiction would be built to meet net zero energy reduction goals. Additionally, all new school projects would have their roofs designed, infrastructure planned and space allocated to be solar ready. This bill also provides a no interest net zero school loan paid back with the energy cost savings of the school to assist with any potential additional cost of reaching zero energy for schools. Schools are projects that are well suited based on floor to roof area to be zero energy structures and some may have the capacity to be net positive, feeding electricity back into the grid. While this is important from an operational cost standpoint, this is also an important means of educating our students to help them understand efforts we are making to slow down the effects of climate change and lessons within the buildings can be brought into the classroom. Since 20% of our state population is in public schools every day, this has a broad impact on our residents.

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The energy conservation steps of this goal apply to new commercial construction and they largely move the goal line one step closer for each code cycle. Energy codes are reviewed and updated every three years and using the 2018 energy code as a baseline, the incremental steps increase efficiency by 30% by 2026, 40% by 2029 and 60% by 2032, taking us to net zero energy by 2033. This just moves the cycle in the direction it is heading a few years in advance of when they would be adopted. Additionally, one way to significantly reduce the carbon footprint is to work with buildings we already have. This bill applies to major renovation projects and changes in a building use. There can be aspects of an existing structure that are limiting, so the bill provides two paths to reduce energy consumption, either a 40% reduction in average energy use, or a 20% improvement over code requirements for a new building. These common-sense measures will move the needle toward lowering energy demand and creating a healthier environment in which we live.

The Climate Solutions Now Act puts Maryland on a path to slow the impact of climate change. The measures within the bill will move us toward healthier, more efficient communities and structures in which we live work and play. The reduced energy demand provides long term savings on operational costs as most buildings provide 50+ years or more of service. We ask for your support of HB0583 to help have an impact on climate change now.

Sincerely,



Chris Parts, AIA
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland

cc: Environment and Transportation Committee:

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