



Committees: Environment and Transportation/Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB 583
Position: Favorable

On behalf of the Maryland chapter of the NAACP, I strongly urge a favorable report on HB 583, the Climate Solutions Now Act. The bill is aptly named because we cannot wait another year to start reducing our emissions.

Fossil fuels are driving disparities in the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent Harvard study found that very small increases in exposure to pollutants from fossil fuel combustion causes someone to be significantly more likely to die from COVID-19. This is one of the many reasons why black Americans are twice as likely to die from COVID-19 than white Americans. After all, black Americans are 79% more likely to live near industrial pollution sites than white Americans.

Even before the pandemic, fossil fuel pollution was driving racial disparities in health outcomes. For example a black child is 500% more likely to die from asthma than a white child. The bottom line is that fossil fuel pollution contributing to the deaths of black people every day and we need to act Now. Not next year.

The Climate Solutions Now Act requires the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 60% by 2030 and have net zero emissions by 2045. This will coincide with a reduction in the co-pollutants that are causing these health disparities.

The Climate Solutions Now Act will not only improve the air in black communities, but it will also plant trees. This bill plants 500,000 trees in urban communities that have been historically redlined or are economically disadvantaged. Two thirds of all the funding to plant these trees will go to these communities. Planting these trees will improve home values, and help protect urban communities from ever worsening heat waves caused by the climate crisis.

This bill directly works to undo some of the impacts of environmental racism, and it also ensures that all future climate legislation will address inequities. The Climate Solutions Now Act requires the Commission on Environmental Racism and Sustainable Communities to set a percentage of all state funds spent to address climate change that must go to underserved, burdened communities.

As the Climate Solutions Now Act emphasizes, climate justice is racial justice. I urge a favorable report.