



Mission: *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy* **Vision:** *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

House Bill 0695: Environment – Climate Crisis Plan – Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022)

Hearing Date: 2/18/2022

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Position: Support

Chairperson Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The Maryland Public Health Association would like to express support for HB 0695 sponsored by Delegate Frasier-Hidalgo. This bill will require each county to prepare a climate crisis plan to address the effects of climate change in each county. Climate change and its impacts are causing significant threats to many communities across the globe, including those in the state of Maryland. Maryland’s coastal communities and businesses are particularly at risk along the Chesapeake Bay due to a rising sea level and land sinking, resulting in flooding and damage to local businesses and homes.¹ With threats of unprecedented flooding, a rising sea level and various health impacts, change is need now to mitigate this threat at the local level.

Climate change is now recognized as a major global health threat and the public is increasingly becoming more aware of its many implications for health, industry, weather and much more. A 2020 Pew Research survey reported 63% of Americans agree that global climate change is affecting their local community and 60% believes that the federal government is doing “too little” to reduce the effects of climate change. It also reports that 90% of American favor initiatives such as planting a trillion trees to absorb atmospheric carbon emissions.²

With efforts such as the Paris Climate Agreement, establishing international goals and standards, many may consider the work to end climate change as a complex issue to be decided at the national and international level, alone. However, much of the work to end climate change must be done at the local level as local governments tend to play a more crucial and influential role in implementing necessary actions.

For one, local governments are on the front line and tend to be more acutely aware of community-level implications for policies and strategies. Local leaders usually have a deep connection to the communities and are invested in executing initiatives that benefit their communities. They usually are also very connected to their constituents and are effective in mobilizing volunteers and community members. It is also estimated that 70% of climate change reduction measures and up to 90% of climate change adaptation measures are undertaken by local government.³

Climate change is a global issue that is affecting us all and we must each do our part at all levels—individual, local, national, and international. House Bill 0695 requires Maryland counties to do this at the

¹ Sea Level Rise, “Maryland’s Sea Level Is Rising,” Sea Level Rise Maryland, accessed February 16, 2022, <https://sealevelrise.org/states/maryland/>.

² Alec Tyson and Brian Kennedy, “Two-Thirds of Americans Think Government Should Do More on Climate,” Pew Research Center Science & Society (Pew Research Center, July 12, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2020/06/23/two-thirds-of-americans-think-government-should-do-more-on-climate/>.

³ Annabelle Jaeger, “Five Reasons Why Local Government Should Influence Climate Change Plans,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, January 6, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/jan/06/local-government-climate-change-plans>.

local level and not only address climate change but educate and engage with the community to do so. It also holds counties accountable by requiring the climate crisis plan but strengthens the communication with a key stakeholder and resource to the counties, the Maryland Department of the Environment. Many other U.S. communities have already begun developing similar climate crisis plans based upon frameworks such as the Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) framework, developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.⁴ This crisis challenges us all to think globally and act locally to have a future with fresh air, safe water and more sustainable practices and this house bill is a crucial component to ensuring that all counties in the state of Maryland are accountable in working to mitigate climate change.

We urge a favorable report on HB0695.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA)
PO Box 7045 · 6801 Oak Hall Ln · Columbia, MD 21045-9998
GetInfo@MdPHA.org www.mdpha.org 443.475.0242

⁴ “Climate and Health - CDC’s Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (Brace) Framework,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 9, 2019), <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/BRACE.htm>.