

November 19, 2019

To whom it may concern:

As the nation-wide trend of moving our power sector beyond coal continues to gain momentum, we, the below-signed organizations and community leaders, call on Maryland state officials to, by the end of 2020, establish a specific and equitable plan to transition completely away from coal-fired power plants by 2025.

Maryland remains home to six large coal-fired power plants contributing to public health problems, climate disruption, and environmental degradation. Power plants that burn coal pump out toxic and dangerous pollution like lead, mercury, selenium, smog-forming nitrogen oxides, and acid rain-causing sulfur pollution. Eighty-eight percent of Marylanders live in Counties not meeting clean air smog standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency. Breathing smog is like getting a sunburn on your lungs and exacerbates respiratory issues like asthma – an illness impacting hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, including a disproportionate amount of the state's people of color.

It is clearly time for Maryland to prepare for the transition away from coal-fired power plants. We must support communities overburdened by coal pollution and impacted workers in defining, creating and implementing strategies that provide certainty for transition timelines. The local communities that are home to both the coal plants and many of the plant workers must be a part of developing the strategies and programs that will strengthen the health of their community and local economy. These plans must allow impacted industry and current union workers to receive access to training programs and economic opportunities that provide good-paying, family-sustaining, union jobs and the worker's right to unionize must be protected.

Maryland is not alone in the need for a just transition from coal. Places like New York and Washington state have developed and implemented coal community transition plans, and initiatives are moving forward in many other states like Montana and Colorado. Maryland must lead on this issue and develop a plan to provide communities and our workforce with certainty and specificity on this transition away from coal.

Maryland's reliance on coal-powered electricity is on a steep decline, but Marylanders continue to face significant environmental harms from coal plants, and these will continue until they stop polluting our air and water, we must recognize and prepare for the potential near-term economic impacts for fossil fuel communities. Maryland needs a plan to responsibly guide us off of coal in the next decade and ensure our workers and impacted communities are making decisions about how to thrive in the clean energy economy.

We urge your leadership on this important public health, economic, and environmental issue.

Respectfully,

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
350 Montgomery County
Baltimore Jewish Council

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry
Climate Law & Policy Project
Climate XChange
Earthjustice
Food & Water Action
Friends of St Clements Bay
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Indivisible Central Maryland
IndivisibleHoCoMD
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Maryland United for Peace and Justice
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery County Young Democrats
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Safe Skies Maryland
Sierra Club
Sunrise Movement
Sunrise Movement Towson
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia, MD
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland