



7338 Baltimore Ave
Suite 102
College Park, MD 20740

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB174 – “Investor-Owned Utilities – Prevailing Wage”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: January 21, 2021

The Maryland Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB174. This legislation would ensure that individuals who work on our important underground electric and gas infrastructure are compensated fairly. Specifically, the bill would require investor-owned utilities to mandate their contractors and sub-contractors to pay these workers not less than the applicable prevailing wage.

The Sierra Club, nationally and in Maryland, is committed to the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion, and supports placing these principles at the center of environmental initiatives. These principles include respecting and supporting the rights of workers, which includes their ability to have good jobs, earn a decent living, and enjoy occupational health and safety protections.

This commitment is reflected in our priority legislation this session (HB66) to transition Maryland off its reliance on coal-burning power plants. A critical component of the bill is the establishment of a Fossil Fuel Community Transition Fund to support impacted workers and communities. The fund would support paid worker retraining; financial compensation for impacted workers; investment in climate action projects in impacted communities; site deactivation, reuse, and remediation projects that hire from the high-quality workforce now employed at the coal plants; and compensation for a portion of lost local property tax revenues.

Two years ago, the Maryland Sierra Club prioritized passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, to support significant increases in wind and solar energy in Maryland, and, as well, training programs for growing our clean energy workforce.

This bill is a straightforward way in which Maryland should support its energy workforce. We urge a favorable report.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.