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Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 94 - "State Vehicle Fleet – Conversion to Zero-Emission Passenger Cars and Other Light-Duty Vehicles"
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 20, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 94 to require the State to purchase a specified minimum percentage of zero-emission passenger cars and other light-duty vehicles for its vehicle fleet in certain fiscal years, subject to the availability of funding. The end goal is to have 100% of the passenger cars in the state vehicle fleet to be zero-emission vehicles by 2031, and 100% of other light-duty vehicles in the state vehicle fleet to be zero-emission by 2036. However, the requirement to purchase zero-emission vehicles for the state fleet does not apply to vehicles used for paratransit service or vehicles that have special performance requirements necessary for the protection and welfare of the public.

HB 94 also requires the Department of General Services to ensure the development of charging infrastructure to support the operation of zero-emissions vehicles in the state fleet.

The transportation sector is Maryland's number one generator of climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions. Our state's Greenhouse Gas Inventory indicates that gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles account for 89% of this sector's pollution. Tailpipe emissions from these vehicles also are hazardous to human health and contribute to cancers, heart disease, asthma, emphysema and other respiratory diseases. More than 80% of Marylanders live in counties that do not meet federal clean air standards for ozone, due in significant part to tailpipe emissions.

In 2013, Maryland joined seven other states in signing a memorandum of understanding committing to have 300,000 zero-emission vehicles (including plug-ins) on the road by 2025, and 600,000 EVs on the road by 2030. The state also has a goal it set for itself in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act to reduce state greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 (compared to the 2006 level). This bill would significantly increase the likelihood the state will be able to meet those goals.

In summary, converting the State's fleet of passenger cars and other light-duty vehicles to zero-emission electric vehicles is necessary to meet our climate targets and protect public health. This bill would also generate savings for the state over time because zero-emission electric vehicles have much lower fuel and maintenance costs than gas and diesel-powered vehicles. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.