



Maryland Chapter
P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: SB 552 - Climate Crisis Plan - Requirement (Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022)

Position: Support with Amendments

Hearing Date: February 24, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 552 but would like to propose some amendments for the committee's consideration. This legislation requires counties to prepare a plan to address the effects of and reduce their contribution to climate change. The counties will be required to plan for a number of issues they are facing today, including infrastructure risk mitigation, controlling greenhouse gas emissions, and transitioning to green energy sources.

Climate change is eroding our shorelines and cliffs, bringing changing weather patterns to our crops, and removing the snow from our mountains. While the state considers its contribution to and mitigations against climate change, this bill addresses a gap in how it will be addressed at the county level. This is an important step in engaging local communities in the fight against climate change.

This bill does not require counties to take specific action and leaves the planning to those at the local level. By requiring counties to hold public hearings and develop a plan to address how their constituent communities should be protected from climate change it involves important stakeholders and decision-makers in the process. The bill also provides support from the Department of the Environment to provide feedback on proposed plans.

While we understand the need for the bill to defer planning to local governments and avoid specific targets in some areas, the bill could be improved by requiring a plan of action and milestones for sourcing clean and renewable energy and achieving net-zero emissions.

We urge a favorable report, but propose the following amendments which would require counties to develop plans to achieve 100% clean and renewable energy and achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions:

- Pg. 2 replace "Increasing the county's use of renewable energy" with "Developing a plan to support sourcing of 100% of the county's energy from clean and renewable sources by a given date"
- Pg. 3, replace "establishing greenhouse gas reduction targets for the county" with "Developing a plan for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by a given date"

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.

The proposed amendments would set specific goals for the counties to achieve in these critical performance areas while allowing for the counties to plan to achieve those goals through processes that best fit their local conditions. We believe that SB 552 would be a valuable addition to the process of mitigating the effects of climate change and transitioning our state to clean energy by engaging county governments and local communities and we encourage a favorable report.

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