



Montgomery County Group

June 11, 2019

Testimony of Montgomery County Sierra Club on Montgomery County Bill No. 10-19

Good afternoon. My name is Michal Freedman and I am here speaking on behalf of the Sierra Club's Montgomery County group in support of Bill 10-19, with proposed suggestions to expand the scope of the bill.

Bill 10-19 would require the Director of the Office of Legislative Oversight to prepare, for each bill, an economic impact statement that would assess certain positive and negative economic effects. These include a bill's potential impact on the workforce, the operating costs for businesses and non-profits, economic development and County competitiveness.

The underlying rationale of Bill 10-19 is that decisions on proposed legislation will be improved if, in addition to a bill's explicit rationale, its ripple effects are also brought to light. Legislation often has unintended consequences, which are sometimes adverse. It is important to describe and evaluate those consequences, particularly where they affect important values, goals, and commitments of the County. This is a sound principle that we strongly support. Economic impacts are important concerns of the County, and thus it makes sense to consider them in reviewing new legislation.

But there is another critical goal of this County, which involves averting potentially devastating consequences. As you know, the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed Resolution No. 18-974 in December 2017 "to use all available powers and resources to ... restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy" and "initiate large-scale efforts to remove excess carbon from the atmosphere." The Resolution recognized that the County "needs to do much more, much faster."

In Sierra Club's view, the County's declared commitment to climate safety means that proposed legislation must also be evaluated for its climate impact. To require evaluation of proposed legislation solely in terms of economic parameters without also reviewing its consequences for the climate could lead to undermining the County's commitment to be a leader on climate, because some kinds of economic activity would make the already dire climate crisis worse. Climate impact evaluation would also enhance the Council's ability to judge whether other approaches can avert the unintended climate consequences of a bill.

Moreover, a proper assessment of medium- and long-term economic consequences requires taking into account impacts on the climate. The Council's Resolution, backed up by a vast scientific literature, describes the multitude of impacts of an unsafe climate. Montgomery County's mitigation and resiliency efforts will be costly, and if a bill will add to those costs by

further degrading the climate, the Council should know that before it decides. Thus, to truly assess economic impact, Bill 10-19 should encompass an evaluation of climate impacts.

We urge passage of Bill 10-19 with amendments to ensure that proposed legislation is not only evaluated for its economic impacts but also its potential consequences for furthering a safe climate and a sustainable economy.

Thank you.

Michal Freedman
Sierra Club Montgomery County Executive Committee, Vice Chair