



November 12, 2020

Sierra Club Presentation on 2021 Session

Sierra Club Remarks to Jt. House and Senate Priorities Hearing - November 12, 2020

From Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair of Sierra Club Montgomery Group

Good evening. My name is Shruti Bhatnagar and I am Chair of the Sierra Club's Montgomery County Group.

The Sierra Club applauds the Montgomery County delegation for its dedication to protecting our precious and vulnerable environment. In the upcoming session, the Sierra Club's priorities will focus on three key areas: clean energy; affordable, just, and clean transportation; and zero waste.

On clean energy, our principal focus will be on passing legislation to set a firm date for retiring Maryland's remaining coal plants, and to provide a just transition for affected workers and communities. Maryland's coal plants continue to be one of the most significant sources of climate, air, and water pollution, undermining the health of Maryland residents, particularly communities of color.

It is clear that coal is on its way out. The Dickerson plant has closed, the plants in Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties will cease burning coal by 2025. Still, we need legislation to ensure a schedule for **all** Maryland coal plants to close, and to protect affected workers and communities.

We also support the local bill to allow Montgomery County to adopt community choice energy, and a bill to require the Public Service Commission to factor climate change into its decisions regarding new electricity-generation facilities.

As you know, the transportation sector is the number one contributor of debilitating greenhouse gases in our state. This session the General Assembly must fully fund the capital needs of the Maryland Transit Administration, and should set in motion a plan to convert our state's bus fleet to electric buses. We also support efforts to expand MARC, and would like to see the delegation continue to voice their concerns about the I-495 and I-270 expansion plan.

Finally, in 2021 the General Assembly must end the use of single-use plastic shopping bags in Maryland. The world is facing a plastics pollution crisis. Worldwide, an estimated one trillion plastic carryout bags are used and thrown out each year. We also urge you to support a beverage container deposit program, a bill that would make producers finance recycling of their products, and a bill requiring major generators of organic waste to recycle and divert if from the waste stream.

The Sierra Club looks forward to working closely with you for a productive 2021 session. Thank you.

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