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Committee: Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Testimony on: Department of the Environment - Zero-Emission Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicles - Regulations (Clean Trucks Act of 2023)
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 9, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports SB224 and considers it to be one of our high priority bills this session. SB224 would require the Maryland Department of the Environment to adopt the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) Rule by the end of this year. The rule would require vehicle manufacturers to sell an increasing annual percentage of zero-emission trucks and school buses in the state beginning in Model Year 2027 and concluding in 2035. The rule would increase the percentage of new zero-emission trucks and school buses required to be sold each year at a pace that would be gradual and technologically feasible.

Transportation is the largest source of climate-damaging greenhouse gas emissions and a leading source of toxic air pollution that is hazardous to human health. According to data from a report by the International Council on Clean Transportation, if Maryland adopts the ACT, the state would avoid more than 116,000 cases of respiratory illnesses like asthma cumulatively through 2050. Residential neighborhoods located near major roads and highways face disproportionate burdens from traffic and transportation pollution. These neighborhoods are far more often communities of color due to decades of residential segregation, and bear a burden of higher rates of asthma and other health conditions.

Section 177 of the Clean Air Act allows states to adopt vehicle emissions standards that are identical to those adopted by the state of California. In 2020, in the absence of federal regulations, California set the first-in-the-nation standards for the sale of zero-emission medium and heavy-duty trucks through adoption of the ACT Rule. Since then, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington have adopted the same ACT Rule, and a number of other states are considering doing so, too. In 2023, the Maryland Commission on Climate Change included a recommendation in its annual report that the state adopt the ACT Rule.

Companies across the nation are increasingly demanding electric trucks and vans to help them meet their climate and pollution goals, and to save on the costs of fuel and maintenance. More than 70 major corporations, including IKEA and Nestle that have large truck fleets, signed a letter urging state governors to accelerate the growth of electric trucks by adopting the ACT Rule. Electric trucks are increasingly available. There are over 100 models from more than 30 manufacturers that are currently on the market or will be before 2024.

By requiring the electrification of school buses and large pickup trucks, drayage, delivery, and semi-trailer trucks sold in Maryland, the ACT Rule would be a crucial step in the effort to combat climate change and reduce the toxic air pollution that makes us sick. We urge 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.