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**Committee: Economic Matters**

**Testimony on: HB1008 – Electric Bicycle Rebate Program**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: March 9, 2023**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 1008, the “Electric Bicycle Rebate Program.” In Maryland, transportation contributes to 35% of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, making it the biggest source of climate change pollution in the state. Much of this pollution comes from private cars powered by fossil fuels. Although replacing these cars with electric vehicles (EVs) will help reduce GHG emissions, doing so cannot be the only approach. Options that require little or no external energy, such as walking and bicycling, are also necessary to decrease the state’s GHG emissions. Electric bicycles (e-bikes) require a small fraction of the electricity that EVs need. Unlike EV batteries, e-bike batteries are small enough to be charged in a wall outlet in a person’s home; no special charging station is required.

Automobile ownership is also an equity issue. Residents on low or moderate incomes might not be able to afford a car, a factor that could affect their job opportunities. E-bikes are far less expensive than cars and provide several advantages over manual bicycles. With motor assistance, e-bikes need less human strength to operate and can reach a speed of 20 miles an hour. Hence, compared to riders on manual bicycles, those on electric ones can arrive at work faster and without sweating as much. Hauling items such as groceries also becomes easier. Thus, e-bikes can replace cars on many trips for which manual bikes would not suffice.

Providing rebates for e-bikes is an effective strategy. In Denver, Colorado, a similar program was launched in April 2022. As a result, e-bike owners replaced an average of 3.4 car trips a week, preventing the pollution that those trips would have generated. Furthermore, low-income owners were riding 32 miles per week, demonstrating the benefits they gained by being able to purchase an e-bike.

There have been recent reports of accidents involving e-bikes that resulted in death or serious injury; most of these resulted from defective brakes. Hence, we suggest that the Maryland Energy Administration set standards to determine the safety of e-bikes, focusing on the brakes in particular, and that to qualify for a rebate, an e-bike must meet those standards.

The Electric Bicycle Rebate Program will help protect our environment and help promote equity. We urge a favorable report on HB1008.

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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.