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Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB487 – “Environment – Low Emission Vehicle Program – Prohibition .
(Affordable Emission Standards Act of 2023)”
Position: Oppose
Hearing Date: February 24, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly opposes HB487. The bill would prohibit the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) from adopting regulations to implement the Advanced Clean Cars II Regulation or any other regulations relating to new motor vehicle emission standards adopted by the California Air Resources Board unless analyses are prepared that assess the potential impact on consumers and businesses, the state’s budget, and the state’s electric grid if the regulations were adopted. The analyses must then be submitted to the General Assembly which must enact a law to authorize the adoption of the regulation.

Transportation is the largest source of climate-damaging greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and a leading source of toxic air pollution that is hazardous to human health, with more than 70% of those emissions coming from the tailpipes of gasoline and diesel-powered cars and trucks. More than 80% of Marylanders live in counties that do not meet federal EPA clean air standards for ozone. Residential neighborhoods located near major roads and highways face disproportionate burdens from transportation pollution. These neighborhoods are often communities of color due to decades of residential segregation, and bear the burden of higher rates of cancer, heart disease, chronic respiratory diseases and premature death.

In 2007, Maryland took advantage of Section 177 of the Clean Air Act, which allows states to adopt vehicle emissions standards that are more strict than federal standards if they are identical to those adopted by the state of California. Maryland is now one of thirteen Section 177 states plus Washington, DC that is legally required to adopt and maintain California’s clean car standards as they are updated.

A Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC) Mitigation Working Group presentation in May 2022 indicated that achieving our state’s goal of 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2006 levels by 2031 (as required by the Climate Solutions Now Act enacted last year) could require 100% of zero-emission light duty vehicle sales by 2035. The MCCC’s latest Annual Report, which was published in November 2022, contained a number of policy recommendations including, “By the end of 2022, MDE should adopt the Advanced Clean Cars II (ACCII) standards – following the lead of other Section 177 States – that accelerate ZEV sales percentages starting with model 2026 and ramp up to achieve 100% ZEV sales share for new cars by 2035.” Another MCCC recommendation was, “MDE should adopt the Advanced Clean Truck rule – following the lead of states that have adopted or are moving to adopt this rule including CA, CT, MA, ME, NJ, NY, OR, VT, and WA to require manufacturers to increase the sale of zero-emission trucks and school buses.”

The latest United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report says we are running out of time to take bold action on the climate crisis. HB487 would delay the state’s action to address the climate change already underway, the recommendations of the MCCC, and the General Assembly’s decision last session to require the state to achieve a 60% reduction in GHG emissions by 2031 and to be net-zero in GHG emissions by 2045. We strongly recommend an unfavorable 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.