



MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NETWORK

House Bill 504 – Purchase of Motor Vehicles and Building Construction, Renovation, Rehabilitation, and Modification – Social Cost of Carbon

Committee: Appropriations

February 19, 2019

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Environmental Health Network supports bills that are consistent with scientific research in the fields of public and environmental health, and those which advance social justice and equity. Marylanders are more likely to achieve health and longevity when we live in environments of clean air and water, strong local economies, and meaningful community engagement in policy-making. As a statewide network, we draw on a diverse constituency of health and environmental advocates, educators, researchers, health care professionals, and community leaders to evaluate legislative proposals. For these reasons, we heartily support House Bill 504 requiring the Department of General Services to model emerging best practices by inclusion of the social cost of carbon emissions as part of a life-cycle costs to protect the conditions of human health.

As a statewide voice on the interrelated threats of a warming planet we closely monitor climate change as an existential threat to our species, and pay particular attention to vulnerable population protection and systems-level actions as an opportunity to advance the public health. The EPA recognizes the social cost of carbon as a measure of the economic harm of emitting one ton of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. It also captures the value of damages avoided for a small emissions reduction expressed as the dollars spent, or saved.¹

As a committee that regulates expenditures of resources you know all too well that the full costs of an action should rightly include all related expenses over the lifetime or intended use, depreciation, and salvage value, if any. Similarly, in public health we look at the conditions, contributing factors, and outcomes of an action to determine its value in relationship to the social determinants of health.² This roughly translates to consideration of conditions in homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities and whether they add to or take away from the ability of a given population to thrive.³

Our vantage point of systems level valuation affords us the opportunity to consider the linkages between carbon emissions and public health impacts of climate change. These impacts include soil erosion, flooding, waterborne illness, and job insecurity, as well as more traditionally monitored increases in respiratory and cardiovascular disease, preventable injuries, and premature deaths related to extreme weather events.

As such, we find it necessary to speak up when we see connections between the health of Marylanders and opportunities to procure material assets (for the construction and renovation of buildings, and in the selection of vehicles for purchase) that have a direct impact on carbon emissions; because they ultimately and cumulatively

¹The Social Cost of Carbon, Estimating the Benefits of Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climatechange/social-cost-carbon_.html, Accessed February 1, 2019.

² World Health Organization, Commission on Social Determinants of Health. Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Available from: http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en External Web Site Policy, Accessed February 1, 2019

³ U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, Secretary's Advisory Committee on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020. Healthy People 2020: An Opportunity to Address the Societal Determinants of Health in the United States. July 26, 2010. Accessed February 1, 2019 <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2010/hp2020/advisory/SocietalDeterminantsHealth.htm>

influence the public health. These types of choices determine where we live, eat, pray, and play. Our state recognizes this power of choice, and directs considerable sums of money to stimulate clean energy production, mitigate and adaptation strategies, and to respond to environmental disasters that are likely exacerbated by climate change.⁴

We support HB504 because it holistically accounts for the costs of carbon emissions and makes it a standard. We hope to encourage this as good governmental practice. Inclusion of these impacts allows the state to make decisions, at inception, that would lower the exposure and long term costs for residents in our state. And, it would do so at a relatively modest expense, in favor of a priceless, livable future.

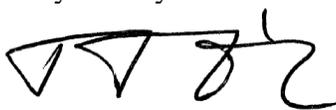
Our mission at the Maryland Environmental Health Network is to promote the elimination of environmental threats to human health. As a part of that mission, we facilitate the Environmental Justice Legislative Team to magnify community voices in the legislative process to address environmental inequities in our state, because we believe that it makes better policy by surfacing the full costs of action or inaction. Simply put, better information yields better decision making.

The burdens of climate change include increased economic insecurity, which is not borne equally throughout our state. Poor and overburdened communities both bear a disproportionate share of risk and expense, and have the fewest resources to allow them to recover fully. The 4th National Climate Assessment tells us that “risks are often highest for those that are already vulnerable, including low-income communities, some communities of color, children, and the elderly.”⁵ Climate change is a multiplier of harm, amplifying existing social and economic inequality.

We support consideration of the social cost of carbon in purchasing decisions to fully appreciate the financial impacts of pollution, and to track costs already borne by the state or private sector in disaster relief, including loss of revenue, and employee illness. Otherwise, the people and the problems will remain invisible -- to the detriment of our most vulnerable citizens. Finally, we support this bill because we believe it will usher in an era of smarter processes to account for, and hopefully reduce, future carbon emissions.

For these reasons we support HB504 and request a favorable report from this committee in furtherance of health protections for every Marylander.

Thank you for your consideration.



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⁴ Maryland Public Service Commission, <http://www.psc.state.md.us/electricity/renewable-energy/> Accessed, February 1, 2019

⁵ Jay, A., D.R. Reidmiller, C.W. Avery, D. Barrie, B.J. DeAngelo, A. Dave, M. Dzaugis, M. Kolian, K.L.M. Lewis, K. Reeves, and D. Winner, 2018: Overview. In Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II [Reidmiller, D.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, K.L.M. Lewis, T.K. Maycock, and B.C. Stewart (eds.)]. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA, pp. 33–71. doi: 10.7930/NCA4.2018.CH1, <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/1/>