

The Maryland General Assembly Just Passed the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022

Here's What the Bill Does

The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 sets one of the most ambitious climate pollution reduction goals in the country. By establishing the Building Energy Performance standard, Maryland now becomes one of only a handful of states addressing the emissions that come from buildings. With the passage of this bill, Maryland leads the way on climate equity and environmental justice by prioritizing overburdened and underserved communities in mitigation efforts.

Updating our GHG Reduction Plan

The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act of 2016 established in statute a statewide reduction of emissions of 40% by 2030 (from 2006 levels). Unfortunately, several recent reports from the IPCC have highlighted rapidly worsening climate change, warranting more ambitious goals.² [SB528](#) sets a goal of 60% reductions by 2031, in order to reach net neutrality by 2045. This policy also updates our greenhouse gas accounting practices to ensure that we are using the most up-to-date science, and technology to accurately measure methane, a very potent and harmful greenhouse gas.

Promoting Climate Equity

Climate change does not impact everyone equally. Low-income communities and communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by the negative effects of the fossil fuel industry and will feel climate change first and hardest. We must ensure that climate solutions reach these communities first.

[SB528](#) invests in Climate Justice by:

- Directing the Maryland Dept. of the Environment (MDE) to work in consultation with the **Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities** to study cumulative impacts. MDE will also establish strategies to address environmental justice and advance climate equity.
- Defining the terms “overburdened communities” and “underserved communities” using metrics identified through extensive research and consensus work.
- Expanding the **Chesapeake Conservation Corp** to include positions that focus on achieving GHG reduction targets. These jobs could include clean energy projects, climate mitigation projects, or holistic retrofits of low-income households.
- Establishing a **Just Transition Employment and Retraining Working Group** to convene labor, legislators, the Secretary of Labor’s office, environmental groups, and renewable energy companies to make policy recommendations for how to best serve fossil fuel workers in Maryland.
- Establishing the **Climate Catalytic Capital Fund** to support projects to reduce GHG emissions in overburdened communities, including transportation electrification, building electrification, weatherization for LMI households, and the creation of a Maryland Green Bond Program.

Reducing emissions from our buildings

Buildings emit 40% of Maryland's greenhouse gasses (13% of which are direct emissions) and account for 90% of Maryland's electricity use.³ The Climate Solutions Now Act addresses this by:

- Requiring the Public Service Commission to study the capacity of each utility company's gas and electric distribution systems to meet the needs of a managed transition to a highly electrified buildings sector. An interim report would be due by January 1, 2023, and a final report by September 30th, 2023.
- Directing MDE to create a **Building Energy Performance Standard** for existing buildings larger than 35,000 square feet to reduce the direct emissions from buildings by 20% by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions by 2040.
- Establishing a **Building Energy Transition Implementation Task Force** to study and make recommendations regarding the reduction of GHG emissions from buildings and retrofits of existing buildings.

Electrifying our state-owned vehicles

Transportation is the top-emitting sector in Maryland.³ It is crucial that the state lead by example and **transition our state fleet to zero-emission vehicles (ZEV)**. Climate Solutions Now begins that process by:

- Requiring a portion of the passenger cars purchased for the state fleet be ZEV starting in the fiscal year 2023 and reaching 100% by 2031.
- Requiring a portion of all light-duty vehicles purchased for the state fleet be ZEV starting in the fiscal year 2028 and reaching 100% by 2036.
- Requiring all new contracts for the purchase or use of a school bus to be zero-emission vehicles, starting in 2025.

Investing in our Grid

We know that to reach our climate goals we will need a grid that can support our more complex energy needs. By adopting provisions from HB88/SB525, Climate Solutions Now supports the Public Service Commission's (PSC) distribution system planning process by establishing goals, harnessing federal funding, and requiring the PSC to adopt regulations for distribution system planning.

To avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change, we must cut emissions economy-wide and reach net-zero by 2045. We must invest in the communities burdened by dirty energy systems. We must pass bold climate solutions!

Works Cited

1. Md. Comm'n on Climate Change, Building Energy Transition Plan.; IPCC, 2021: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. In Press.
2. *State of Maryland 2017 Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory*, Air and Radiation Administration Air Quality Policy & Planning Division. Maryland Department of the Environment, 2017.

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