

ADDRESS

Re: Support of Senate Bill 737/House Bill 1520 (Sustainable Maryland Program Fund - Establishment)

Dear Senator/Delegate,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 737/House Bill 1520 (Sustainable Maryland Program Fund - Establishment). My name is Joseph Jakuta and I live in Mount Rainier, MD in District 47A. I am writing as mostly as a long time participant in the Sustainable Maryland program through the Mount Rainier Green Team, where I was chair of the group for three years and a member for about eight years. This program is a great resource to municipalities throughout Maryland to pursue goals related to sustainability through collaboration and the sharing of best practices.

The main goal municipalities aim towards certification under the Sustainable Maryland program. To do this a municipality must establish a citizen advisory group, the so called Green Team, and then choose from a menu of options that once implemented reduce emissions, improve water quality, reduce waste, and create a healthier community for their residents. While some municipalities just try to get over the finish line, many others compete amongst themselves for the most points and achieve an even cleaner environment than they otherwise might in the absence of the program.

But that is not all. The staff also provide opportunities for collective action to improve the environment. For instance, the Sustainable Maryland program recently put in place a pet waste station grant program. If each municipality purchased the waste stations and signage individually the costs would have been prohibitive, especially for smaller municipalities, but by creating a collective grant program this allowed more municipalities to be able to implement this measure to benefit water health. Having a source of stable funding would allow more of these programs to be implemented.

There system also allows municipalities to learn from each other. Either by working with Sustainable Maryland staff or using other municipalities' work as a template, municipalities can learn how best to reduce emissions, improve water quality, reduce waste, and create a healthier community for their residents. Additionally there are meetings every three years or so where multiple municipalities' Green Teams together to share amongst themselves as well. We could certainly benefit from having these more often to share best practices and collaborate. Having a source of stable funding would also allow this to happen.

I urge you to vote to establish the Sustainable Maryland Fund by enacting Senate Bill 737/House Bill 1520.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joseph Jakuta".

Joseph Jakuta
Mount Rainier, MD