

**Thursday, January 13, 2022**

**TO:** Chair Isaac Schleifer, Rule and Legislative Oversight Committee, Baltimore City Council  
**FROM:** Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst  
**POSITION:** Support Council Bill 21-0160 – Building Code – Cool Roofs

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports Council Bill 21-0160 offered by Councilman Conway. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

The buildings sector is among the largest carbon emitting sectors in the state of Maryland. This past year, TNC participated in a work group to inform recommendations in the Maryland Climate Change Commission's Building Energy Transition plan, which would lead to decarbonizing residential and commercial buildings in the state. In addition to supporting broad-scale changes to state policy, advancing Councilman Conway's bill requiring cool roof installation on new construction and additions to existing buildings represent key strategies to reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions from the buildings sector.

Cool roofs are designed to reflect more sunlight and absorb less heat than standard roofs. Typically made of highly reflective paint, sheet covering, or reflective tiles or shingles, cool roofs have the potential to reduce near-surface temperatures and to reduce energy demand for interior cooling. This results in reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality, among other benefits.

Temperatures in cities can run as much as 22 degrees Fahrenheit hotter than in surrounding suburban or rural areas. Cool roofs will help to counteract the heat island effect and improve the health and well-being of Baltimore's residents. As our world gets warmer, the number of days we experience extreme heat will increase, particularly in cities. Extreme heat can worsen existing illnesses, posing severe threats to vulnerable individuals. It can also cause mental and physical stress, heat-related illnesses, and sometimes deaths. Installing cool roofs can reduce these societal costs in addition to the economic costs stemming from increased stress on health care systems, energy demands, and decreased labor productivity during extreme heat.

We commend Councilman Conway for introducing this bill, which would promote public health, mitigate climate change and envision a greener future for Baltimore.

**Therefore, we urge a favorable report on Council Bill 21-0160.**