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Saving a National Treasure

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January 14, 2022

Dear Baltimore City Council,

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation applauds the effort to “convert the City’s fleet, subject to certain exceptions, to zero-emission vehicles”, as stated in Bill Item # 21-0159. If adopted, this bill would improve public health, protect the Chesapeake Bay, and further social justice. **We urge a favorable recommendation from the Ways & Means committee on this bill, with an amendment to §35A-5 to include a more complete annual report:**

#### § 35A-5. Annual report.

The City Purchasing Agent, with cooperation from all City agencies, shall submit an annual report to the Mayor and City Council on:

- (i) the number and amount of contracts and subcontracts that included the purchase of zero-emission vehicles as provided for in this subtitle;
- (ii) the current composition and age of the fleet;
- (iii) a projection of progress toward the interim and final goals established in §35A-2 of this subtitle; and
- (iv) a statement of any new or more accessible zero-emission technologies or vehicle classes that have emerged since the last report.

Vehicles powered by gasoline, a fossil fuel, are large emitters of unclean and unsafe gases like carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, and sulfur dioxide. These gases increase air pollution and smog, and cause negative health impacts on residents, such as increased development of asthma and cardiovascular issues.<sup>1</sup> We know that the Baltimore City Council prioritizes the health of residents, and we are thankful for the Council’s initiative to reduce pollution from the City’s fleet.

Vehicle emissions also have negative consequences on the environment that Baltimoreans and Marylanders love dearly and depend upon. More than one-third of the pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay comes from the air.<sup>2</sup> When absorbed into

<sup>1</sup> “Air Pollution and Your Health.” *National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/air-pollution/index.cfm>.

<sup>2</sup> “The Maryland Healthy Air Act.” *Maryland Department of the Environment*, [https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Air/Pages/MD\\_HAA.aspx#cb\\_benefit](https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Air/Pages/MD_HAA.aspx#cb_benefit).

the watershed, air pollution acidifies the water and creates imbalances in the ecosystem that kill biodiversity. The Bay is also greatly threatened by climate change, including warming temperatures, sea level rise, and increased precipitation.<sup>3</sup> By transitioning the fleet of City vehicles, the Council is taking active steps to reduce air pollution and climate change, thus quickening the results of Bay cleanup efforts.

Harm to the Bay is also a social justice issue. Many families and businesses rely on healthy water for their livelihoods—including recreation, tourism and hospitality, and fishing—and any financial setbacks affect the most vulnerable populations most intensely. Electric vehicles are reliable and cost-effective, and the implementation of such on a City-wide scale positions the City of Baltimore as a leader in economic growth and public health. The transition can also act as a catalyst for conversations around electrification, leading to increased excitement and adoption of electric vehicles around the city that can help us accomplish the electric vehicle goals outlined in Baltimore City's Sustainability Plan.<sup>4</sup>

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has been laboring for the health of the Bay since 1967. Our members have a deep connection to the Bay, the natural environment, and the health of our beautiful state. We trust the advice that scientists give us: electrify as much as we can as quickly as we can, and power it through clean and renewable energy, like wind and solar. Electrifying the City fleet is a great step forward to create a cleaner and more resilient city. We cannot have a healthy and thriving community without a healthy and thriving Bay.

We encourage all members of the Council to vote in support of this bill, with an amendment to ensure a complete annual report of progress toward the Zero Emission Vehicle goals. Together, we can make tremendous progress to preserve the health of residents, the Bay, and our state.

In solidarity,

Julieta Rodrigo  
Urban and Community Resilience Manager  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

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<sup>3</sup> "Maryland's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP)." *Maryland Department of the Environment*, 23 Aug. 2019, <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/Pages/Phase3WIP.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> "Sustainability Plan: Baltimore Office of Sustainability." *Baltimore Office of Sustainability* |, 29 Apr. 2021, <https://www.baltimoresustainability.org/plans/sustainability-plan/>.