

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

TO: Chair Danielle McCray, Health, Environment and Technology 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 21-0075R – Global Warming Solutions – Carbon Neutral City

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports Council Bill 21-0075R 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. TNC has an institutional goal to help to reduce emissions by avoiding or sequestering 3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year by 2030. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says we must reduce carbon emissions to the point where we hold global warming to no more than an additional 3 °F. Global leaders have agreed that net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is a planetary imperative. This is no small feat and will require a range of solutions applied together to reach the goal. We'll need to transition our economy away from carbon-emitting fossil fuels, increase our use of clean energy sources, harness the power of nature to capture carbon, and deploy technologies that capture and store carbon. TNC has led on science which demonstrates that Natural Climate Solutions have the potential to contribute up to a third of the climate mitigation that the Paris Agreement indicates is needed by 2030 and are thus an essential component of the response to the climate crisis.

Around the globe, many of the people who are impacted first and most severely by climate change have contributed far less to the increase in carbon emissions. In cities, the IPCC reports that some aspects of climate change may be amplified, “including heat, flooding from heavy precipitation events and sea level rise in coastal cities.” Making transformative changes to reduce emissions in Baltimore will not only help meet global goals but will positively impact neighborhoods that are currently facing elevated public health risks and concentrated poverty by reducing pollution, creating new job markets, and building a more resilient city.

The City of Baltimore has set ambitious, yet necessary, goals to mitigate global climate change through the 2019 Baltimore Sustainability Plan. To stay on track to meet upcoming 2030 and 2050 City targets, leadership across Baltimore needs to commit to taking immediate action and enacting strategies to meet these carbon neutral goals. We commend Councilman Conway for introducing Council Bill 21-0075R, which would promote public health and safety, mitigate climate change and envision a greener future for Baltimore.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on Council Bill 21-0075R.