

Montgomery County Council

Legislation: Bill 3-22 Legislative Branch-Climate Assessment Required

Organization: The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County Chapter

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Council Hearing: March 1, 2022

My name is Kevin Walton.

I live in Bethesda.

Dear Council President Albornoz and Council Members,

Please accept this update to the written testimony previously submitted. This document includes additional guidance directed to the Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO), intended to provide suggestions as they implement the requirements of Bill 3-22.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of the Climate Assessment Bill, with amendments, on behalf of The Climate Mobilization of Montgomery County.

The guiding principle of The Climate Mobilization is that we are in a climate emergency. Without an all-hands-on-deck perspective, there is no chance for our society to limit the impact of climate change on our civilization. When Montgomery County declared a Climate Emergency in 2017, we were cheered that the county was taking this issue as seriously as it needed.

This bill by the Council significantly moves forward its work to address climate change. We enthusiastically support this bill that requires all bills and other Council actions, zoning text amendments, master plans, and master plan amendments to be considered through the lens of its impact on climate change. Climate change needs to be the overarching calculus for the county if there is to be any hope that it will meet the targets in the county's Climate Action Plan and that the worst effects of our changing climate can be mitigated.

The key outcome of this bill, however, depends on the response by the Council to the information that the climate assessments provide. The bill calls for each assessment to include, if needed, amendments or recommendations that would reduce or eliminate the climate impact of the proposed Council action. We cannot assume these recommendations will come with no cost, either financially or otherwise. The Council must place a priority on incorporating the amendments or recommendations in order for this climate assessment bill to have value.

Further, we support the four amendments, with some adjustments, as proposed by the CAP Coalition that mirror language in the Racial Equity and Justice Act. They are:

1. In (c), Time for Submission, require the Climate Assessment be provided no later than 7 days before the public hearing, giving time for public review and comment.
2. In (d)(2)(A), amend the language to "including QUANTITATIVE MEASURES OF greenhouse gas emissions, sequestration, and carbon drawdown" to clarify that the climate assessment must include an estimate of the impact on greenhouse gas emissions by the legislation.
3. In (e), Compliance section, only allow waiving the climate assessment requirement in the case of an 'expedited' bill.

4. In (f), on the Annual Report, require an assessment of the cumulative results of the legislation to measure progress toward meeting the goals of the climate emergency resolution, not just a summary of the climate assessments done that year.

Regarding implementation of Bill 3-22, TCM requests that OLO include the following as they develop processes to provide review of the climate impact of covered Council actions:

1. The assessments should include a review of whether each Council action aligns with the county's Climate Action Plan. If it does not, then the OLO should provide recommendations on how the Council action can be brought into alignment.
2. The quantification of the climate impacts of each Council action should also include an evaluation of the cost per ton of GHG emissions, and indicate whether this is a decrease or an increase. This will help the Council and the public understand the savings or costs associated with the Council action.
3. Analyses of GHG emissions and savings/costs should be projected out to the key target dates of 2027 and 2035. This will provide to Council and the public a full understanding of the impact of each Council action.
4. The analyses should pay special attention to the requirement of the legislation to the "quantitative or qualitative evaluations of the identified effects upon community resilience and adaptative capacity", as a full understanding of the co-benefits or -costs is needed to truly understand the climate impact of each Council action.

Thank you for your time.

Kevin Walton

The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County Chapter