First Look and Next Steps

The Moore/Miller Administration’s Environmental Record
January – June, 2023

OVERVIEW:

Maryland League of Conservation Voters (Maryland LCV) is dedicated to electing leaders who work to ensure clean water, healthy air, and a resilient climate for everyone in Maryland. We are equally committed to holding these leaders accountable to the promises made during their campaigns, as well as for the actions taken during their years in elected office. As part of our program of accountability, we prepare bi-annual gubernatorial report cards, beginning with an initial report following the first legislative session of new administrations.

Governor Wes Moore and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller secured Maryland LCV’s endorsement of their campaign in May 2022 during the primary election. This endorsement was based on criteria of a bold vision and a commitment to working with key stakeholders, including environmental advocates, to advance their climate and environmental platforms. In June 2022, the Moore/Miller campaign issued a series of pledges in a 100-day climate agenda. For this initial report, we evaluated these pledges, along with publicly available information surrounding cabinet and key leadership appointments and legislative and regulatory priorities. We have also included major environmental legislation introduced and/or signed by the Governor during his six public signing events (held between April 11 and May 16) as evidence of his commitment to and fulfillment of climate pledges.

To ensure a full and complete assessment of the first six months of the Moore/Miller Administration, we solicited feedback from key stakeholders, including partner organizations, legislative leadership, and the Governor’s office themselves. Along with our recommendations, we highlight recommendations from the comprehensive Transition Report to lay the pathway for future action.

The Moore Administration has made significant progress towards meeting their initial pledges, showing a strong commitment to advancing environmental, climate, and justice goals. They are confronting the urgency of climate change, which is experienced by all Marylanders but felt most acutely by those already overburdened by pollution. The administration recognizes that we must take an “all of the above” approach to achieve the ambitious targets laid out by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. The Moore Administration must be aggressive in the face of a tightening budget to ensure Maryland is a national climate leader in confronting environmental as well as economic injustices.

The challenges of the moment are imposing. Maryland must rise to the occasion, demonstrating to the nation what is possible when vision is met with courageous and effective leadership.
Moore/Miller Pledges from 100 Day Climate Plan

Maryland LCV’s strong engagement with the Moore administration was highlighted when it was the only environmental advocacy organization at Gov. Moore’s April climate change roundtable.

**COMMITMENT:**

Appoint a Chief Sustainability, Mitigation, and Resilience Officer

**PROGRESS:** Appointment not yet made, but is expected in mid summer.

**RECOMMENDATION:** This was a cornerstone of the Governor’s campaign commitments to the environment and is essential to the longer-term success of a bold climate agenda. To ensure the position can be as successful as possible, we strongly urge that this appointment be a top-level post, reporting directly to the Governor through the Chief of Staff. This position will oversee and prioritize the implementation of programs and coordination across state agencies to ensure the state meets its climate commitments including placing a high priority on accessing federal funding.

**COMMITMENT:**

Begin the transition to 100% clean electricity and build a clean energy workforce

**PROGRESS:** Although Governor Moore has not issued a plan related to his administration’s stated goal of 100% clean energy generation by 2035, he has taken
steps towards that campaign commitment. In March at an international offshore wind conference hosted in Baltimore, he committed the state to a target goal of 8.5 GW of offshore wind and signed a bill to that effect (SB781) on April 21. On May 16, he also signed the bill to create a permanent community solar program, which will promote solar development of smaller projects across the state. Governor Moore also signed legislation that creates a task force to examine possible tax-and-non tax incentives for solar development on already developed land (SB469) and an energy storage bill that will create the needed infrastructure to support a clean energy economy (HB910).

RECOMMENDATION: In the next 6-12 months, the Governor should provide executive leadership to ensure Maryland achieves 100% clean electricity by 2035, including legislation or new regulation that facilitates this. Achieving this goal will require significant investments from the state and an all-of-government approach with engagement across all agencies. We urge the Governor to immediately convene a broad table of stakeholders to examine energy siting considerations across the state and support legislation for statewide permitting standards for renewable energy development and storage to ensure more equity and efficiency in the permitting process. This workgroup, as well as the solar incentives task force, should lead to legislative proposals in 2024 that will help accelerate the deployment of renewable energy, in particular solar energy, and storage throughout the state. These proposals, several of which were recommended in the transition report, should be championed by the administration.

COMMITMENT:

Hire additional climate change staff to begin implementing the Climate Solutions Now Act

PROGRESS: The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) requested 16 additional staff for the implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 (CSNA). The legislature, responding to a tightened budget, reduced that number. The Governor’s 2023 budget as passed into law included nine new positions to support the programs and reports required by CSNA. Additionally, the Office of People’s Counsel had a $1.3 million increase to their budget to hire additional experts to fulfill their responsibilities regarding consideration of climate change in their work.

RECOMMENDATION: We urge the Governor to actively support legislation, partnerships, and funding opportunities to ensure implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act across sectors. We also recommend the Governor’s 2024 budget allocate funds for MDE to fill all 16 requested positions.

COMMITMENT:

Develop a formal partnership with Maryland’s institutions to more effectively achieve greenhouse gas reduction targets

PROGRESS: On April 3, the Governor hosted a roundtable discussion launching a formal partnership with the University of Maryland Center for Global Sustainability and the State Government to model and achieve the targets set in CSNA. Maryland LCV was honored to participate alongside key stakeholders, including the Chair of the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC). The Governor has also committed to climate job training and partnerships with the nonprofit and private sector through his bill, “Serving Every Region through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023 (SERVE Act)” (HB546/SB551).

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2 Transition Report Recommendations #1, 4, 5 under Climate and the Environment - Clean Energy
**RECOMMENDATIONS:** We urge the Governor to provide funding to expand the pilot program passed through the SERVE Act and work with organized labor, community colleges, and the state’s universities and private colleges — especially Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) — to build training and re-skilling programs for deployment into the clean energy workforce that will make Maryland a leading clean energy innovation hub.\(^3\) We also encourage the Administration to continue building partnerships with universities comparable to the one with UMD’s Center for Global Sustainability through a Climate Science and Research Board.\(^4\)

**COMMITMENT:**

*Maximize State capacity by aggressively competing for every available federal, public, and private dollar*

**PROGRESS:** Although the Administration is creating a “Federal Investment Team” (FIT) with point people from each agency tasked with identifying and applying for federal grants for the State, it has not approached obtaining federal funds with the urgency and prioritization that is needed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Moore Administration needs to maximize the unprecedented opportunity to access federal funds. They should prioritize hiring the Chief Sustainability Officer\(^5\) and immediately give them the responsibility to strengthen partnerships between federal, state, and local governments, neighboring states, and the private sector to ensure that new revenues are obtained and equitably invested to meet state climate and environmental goals. Investments in overburdened and underserved communities should be prioritized.\(^6\) The administration should also increase outreach to residents across the state to educate and increase access to funding sources such as tax credits for rooftop solar or installation of an EV charger. We also encourage the administration to partner with nonprofits and community-based groups to track funding and ensure that it is allocated to the people and communities that need it the most. Currently there is no public portal to track the state’s efforts to obtain federal funding. There needs to be greater transparency regarding the administration’s efforts to apply for and utilize federal funds as the FIT becomes further established.

**COMMITMENT:**

*Prioritize environmental justice funding to overburdened and underserved communities*

**PROGRESS:** Governor Moore’s commitment to environmental justice can be seen in his administrative legislation that prioritizes funding for overburdened and underserved communities, especially in his Energy and Transportation Act (HB550). Additionally, he signed the Transportation Equity Act (HB9/SB583), which addresses his campaign pledge to direct the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to begin conducting transit equity analyses in consultation with members and leaders of impacted communities. The administration has committed to holding meetings around the state to better listen to community voices, and cabinet secretaries have held listening sessions with advocates and community leaders from overburdened and underserved communities.

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\(^3\)Transition Report Recommendations #2 and 4 under Climate and the Environment - Clean Energy  
\(^4\)Transition Report Recommendations #10 under Climate and the Environment - Clean Energy  
\(^5\)The Governor’s climate agenda, released during the campaign, identified a “Chief Climate, Sustainability, and Resilience Officer.” Recognizing that recent legislation created the position of a Chief Resilience Officer, the position they will be creating has been changed to “Chief Sustainability Officer.”  
\(^6\)Transition Report Recommendation #8 under Climate and the Environment - Government Leadership
**RECOMMENDATIONS:** We urge Governor Moore to issue an executive order explicitly directing all state agencies to develop an environmental justice plan and to examine the effects of proposed regulations on environmental justice and racial equity. Additionally, the administration should support and implement a Justice 40 funding approach, including working with the CEJSC to determine the percentage of state funding for GHG emission reduction measures that should be used for the benefit of disproportionately affected communities, per the 2022 Climate Solutions Now Act. Effective implementation of these directives will require environmental justice screening and mapping tools, which will allow for the development of a scorecard that tracks agency implementation of Justice 40 investments and benefits. We urge, as well, the administration to develop effective and meaningful policies on cumulative impacts, comparable to those recently passed in Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York.

**COMMITMENT:**

**Aggressively fight to reduce transportation emissions**

**PROGRESS:** Maryland LCV was proud to stand with Governor Moore as he announced that Maryland would sign on to the California Standard, “Clean Cars II,” that will require an increasing number of private electric vehicles be offered for sale, leading to 100% new electric vehicles in 2035. Additionally, he signed the Clean Trucks Act of 2023 (HB230/SB224) that increases the sale of electric medium-and-heavy duty vehicles, including school buses. Governor Moore’s Energy and Transportation Act (HB550) provided financing support for this transition, which helps to ensure its success. On June 15, Governor Moore stood with government, business, and community leaders and committed to relaunch and expedite the Baltimore Red Line.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** We urge Governor Moore to include funding to encourage the deployment of electric vehicles and the infrastructure to support them, including electric school buses. Public transportation is a key solution to the state’s transportation emissions, and we urge the administration to improve existing and establish new service to increase connectivity throughout the state, especially through rapid advancement of the Baltimore Red Line and the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit projects. MDOT should also seek to improve the quality, accuracy, and accessibility of real-time data of Maryland Transit Administration transit services.

**COMMITMENT:**

**Aggressively protect our Chesapeake Bay and improve Maryland’s water quality**

**PROGRESS:** Governor Moore’s budget included rapid increase in staffing key environmental agencies to support environmental enforcement. The Governor’s budget included 43 new positions to clear the backlog of administratively continued water discharge permits and 24 new positions to increase inspection and enforcement of water...
treatment plants. Additionally, his budget included funding for additional Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps members. It fully funded the Tree Solutions Now Act. And it included funding for a new survey to map the Maryland section of the Chesapeake Bay, information important to advancing oyster reef restoration. He signed into law a number of policies that advance water quality, including the highly significant Forest Conservation Act reform (SB526/HB723). Additionally, Governor Moore took several steps related to confronting invasive species, including calling on the Federal Government to take action that would qualify Maryland for federal fishery disaster assistance through the inclusion of several species that have been threatening the state’s waterways and the Chesapeake Bay: blue catfish, flathead catfish, and snakehead fish.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Moore Administration has an opportunity to lead in protecting and restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay as Maryland works with the Environmental Protection Agency and other Bay states to draft a new Chesapeake Bay Agreement. We urge the Moore Administration to target funding and practices to sectors and locations with the highest impact to water quality. We also urge the Department of the Agriculture to work with stakeholders to promote the transition to sustainable agricultural practices that reduce runoff and improve the environment. Additionally, we encourage continued agency staffing, oversight, enforcement, and funding that will support the goals of restoring the health of the Chesapeake Bay and advance watershed protection, mitigation, and restoration practices.

CABINET APPOINTMENTS:

- The following appointments receive high marks for their experience, commitment to transparency and advancing just, equitable climate and environmental policy, and reflecting the diversity of Maryland’s population. We look forward to seeing additional staffing decisions these agency heads take to support key policy and regulatory priorities.
  - Secretary of the Environment, Serena McIlwain
  - Secretary of Natural Resources, Josh Kurtz
  - Secretary of Transportation, Paul Wiedefeld
  - Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks
  - Secretary of Planning, Rebecca Flora
  - Secretary of Housing and Community Development, Jake Day
  - Maryland Energy Administrator, Paul Pinsky
  - Public Service Commissioners, Fred Hoover, Kumar Barve, Bonnie Suchman
  - Critical Area Commission Chair, Erik Fisher

- The appointment of Chief Sustainability Officer has not been made, and we are eager to see an appointment that will help Maryland achieve its climate and environmental goals.

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12 Transition Report Recommendation #11 under Growing Maryland’s Competitiveness - Agriculture and Rural Development
13 Transition Report Recommendation #16 under Climate and the Environment - Air/Heat/Water
14 Stakeholders look forward to working with Secretary Atticks to develop departmental policies that advance sustainable agricultural practices that utilize healthy soils to advance carbon emission reductions.
15 One of Governor Moore’s initial appointments to the role of Public Service Commission, Jose Alvarado, raised significant concerns with the environmental community based on his statements in support of expanded natural gas infrastructure as part of a clean energy future. The nomination was withdrawn, leaving a path open for much stronger nominees.
Because of the urgency and gravity of climate change and the challenges associated with implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act, the Moore Administration must build on the encouraging progress made during their first six months in office and execute an ambitious strategy, including funding, to achieve their stated goal of 100% clean energy by 2035.

In the months ahead, the administration needs to take immediate and concrete steps to meet the climate challenges facing Maryland. These steps, which will be overseen by the Chief Sustainability Officer, must include:

**Whole of Government Approach:** Every agency must move strategically and in concert to achieve greenhouse gas reductions across all sectors. Specifically, the state must enact and enforce strong and effective building codes that realize the emission reductions associated with smart growth and controlled development. Additionally, the state should serve as a leader by investing in the decarbonizing of state fleets and buildings.

**Comprehensive Investment Strategies:** The Moore Administration must place a high priority on designing and implementing new and powerful strategies to access federal and private investment dollars that leverage state and county green banks. Specifically, they must immediately seize the opportunity to access federal funding and opportunities to direct private investment dollars to Maryland to ensure that the state can implement the Climate Solutions Now Act and that budget revenue shortfalls do not stand in the way of genuine progress.

**100% Clean Energy by 2035:** The Moore Administration should design a comprehensive plan to achieve 100% clean energy generated in Maryland by 2035 that ensures renewable energy goals are met, barriers to deployment of renewable energy are removed, and permanent funding sources are in place. Additionally, the plan should eliminate the generation of fossil fuels and gas in Maryland and develop incentives for electrifying energy generation.

**Climate Solutions Now Act:** Implementing the Climate Solutions Now Act is a top priority if Maryland is to remain a leader in fighting the climate crisis. This comprehensive bill provides the road map to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the Moore Administration should develop a transparent tracking and accounting system for programs, funding and projected emission reductions from key actions that are implemented.

**Environmental Justice:** Underserved and overburdened communities have borne a disproportionate amount of impacts from climate change and pollution. The Moore Administration should prioritize assessing and reducing the cumulative impacts to underserved and overburdened communities. This will require state agencies to work together to assess the cumulative environmental and health impacts from all sources as permits for industries, buildings, and roadways are proposed.

Maryland LCV acknowledges the significant progress made to date by the Moore Administration, especially in light of the enormity of the challenges. We are eager to continue our strong partnership with the Moore Administration and to support bold, strategic policies and actions that leave no one behind as we strive towards a 100% clean energy economy and a healthy environment for all Marylanders.
We use political action and education to fight for clean water, healthy air, and a resilient climate for everyone in Maryland. Join us!

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