

Sierra Club testimony on Bill 10-18,

Director of County Climate Policy

Delivered to County Council at hearing on April 10, 2018 at 1:30 pm

Good afternoon! I'm Dave Sears, chair of the MoCo group of Sierra Club and am here speaking on its behalf.

We support the purpose and intent of this bill; and, overall, we urge MoCo government to invest sufficient resources to more effectively address climate change. Our investment must be strategically targeted to achieve significant progress and measure its impact.

This bill represents an important step in the right direction.

But we also urge the Council to think beyond this bill:

- The senior climate director should be located to achieve maximum visibility and success, such as by reporting directly to the County Executive.
- Bill 10-18 specifies that the responsibilities of the director should include coordinating among county government entities; representing the county with key outside stakeholders; and being vested with the authority to speak for County government both internally and externally.
- We suggest that the intra-government coordination function explicitly include the entire Dept of Environmental Protection, the Dept of Transportation, the Dept of Permitting Services, the Dept of Health and Human Services, the Dept of Economic Development, the County Stat, and the Housing Opportunities Commission.
- We suggest that coordination with the Green Bank should be expanded to include other agencies working on the financial aspects of addressing climate change.
- We suggest that coordination with stakeholders should include key non-profit entities with a strong interest in addressing climate change.
- We suggest that the position should also have responsibility for: developing a comprehensive climate action plan; and measuring progress (using specific milestones) of the county's programs and policies addressing climate change.
- In order to carry out these important functions, the director should be assigned staff, with the expertise to carry out the research, analysis, outreach, and negotiation that will be needed for success.

In structuring the new position within County government, and assessing what additional resources are needed, it will be important to review the experience of other jurisdictions; we encourage the Council and/or Council staff to do so.

Finally we note our disappointment that not all positions related to addressing climate change that have been funded by the Council in recent years – or vacated by a key staff person -- have actually been filled. (For instance, authorized positions in DEP's Office of Sustainability remain unfilled many months after authorization; and although a lead energy analyst left several months ago, that vacancy has not yet been filled.) We urge the Council to pay more careful attention to implementation of its climate change actions.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to being a partner with the county as it moves to more aggressively and effectively address climate change.