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BRANDI NIELAND
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BILL NO.: Senate Bill 528
Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

HEARING DATE: February 15, 2022

SPONSOR: Senator Pinsky, et al.

POSITION: Favorable

The Office of People's Counsel requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 528. SB 528 proposes sweeping actions to reduce Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions and respond to climate change. Last session the General Assembly expanded the authority of both the Office of People's Counsel and the Public Service Commission to consider environmental and climate impacts on matters before the Commission. Our office supports General Assembly efforts requiring and encouraging State and local governments to take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Following legislation last year, we have engaged with the Maryland Commission on Climate Change in discussions and in formulating recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially in the buildings sector.

OPC supports SB 528 provisions to extend the EmPOWER Maryland programs under the supervision of the Public Service Commission. We have long supported the EmPOWER programs as an important vehicle for obtaining the vast benefits of increased energy efficiency. The State's historic effort to increase energy efficiency in the electric sector is a vital component of an overall climate strategy that should work together with beneficial electrification. By adapting and extending the EmPOWER Maryland programs, Maryland will assure that increased electrification will coincide with the most efficient use of electricity. EmPOWER has allowed customers to lower usage and bills through the incentives and programs. Extending the programs will increase these

customer benefits. OPC will continue to engage in proceedings before the Commission to continue EmPOWER Maryland's contribution to overall energy goals.

Recommendation: OPC requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 528.