Energy Industry Revitalization Working Group

Final Recommendations List – September 10, 2024

1. **The State should establish a dedicated liaison/clearinghouse to help small businesses navigate available resources, funding and financing opportunities for the clean energy transition**

An example approach is in the form of a Large Language Model (LLM) that serves as a helpdesk to make access and navigation as easy as possible for small business owners.

2. **The State should expand existing electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure programs within the Maryland energy administration (MEA) with a designated focus on small businesses. The program would draw in existing funding and incentives for small businesses to install EV charging infrastructure.**

With the influx of investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Maryland's National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program is changing the State's landscape of EV charging infrastructure. The new investments present an opportunity for small businesses to share in the benefits of EV charging infrastructure. Studies have shown that charging stations can boost annual spending at nearby businesses, bringing in more revenue to those businesses.

The EV infrastructure programs run by MEA are currently oversubscribed, meaning there is more demand than funding available. Expansion would allow more small business to access these resources, supporting both the environment and the economy of Maryland.

3. **Identify permanent dedicated funding to the Maryland Clean Energy Center Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator program to enable increased growth of small businesses bringing advanced energy, climate mitigation and adaptation solutions for market adoption more expeditiously.**

The Climate Pollution Reduction Plan calls for expansion of clean energy infrastructure to support Maryland residents, small businesses, and large commercial businesses. This transition will help the state in achieving its ambitious emission reduction goals as set forth in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, which include a 60% reduction in emissions by 2031 from 2006 levels and net-zero emissions by 2045. The target of this proposal is to facilitate small businesses from an economic standpoint in the transition from fossil fuel emitting energy production to clean energy production.

The MCEC's Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator (MEIA) program, which started in 2019, facilitates growth for small businesses to be drivers of the energy industry. The program helps expedite the transfer of clean energy and climate technologies from lab to market and create new and investible advanced energy businesses. It was created to unify the intersection of energy innovation, energy entrepreneurs and researchers and business executives to create new and investment-ready clean energy businesses. MEIA also supports early-stage technology commercialization in a myriad of clean energy technologies including solar, wind, and battery technologies. Currently, the MEIA program has baseline funding through 2027 (fiscal year 2028) with funds from the Climate Tech Founders Fund.

With increased funding, the MCEC's MEIA program can be expanded to support more small businesses in the energy transition. The MEIA program currently serves small businesses across industries, and this expansion seeks to capitalize from the potential Maryland has to generate wealth and facilitate rapid decarbonization efforts to achieve climate goals. Because it is estimated that small businesses will bear a level of financial impact through the energy transition, it is important that there are funding, grants, loans, and incentive opportunities in order to mitigate those impacts. Further, the provision of business and industry experts will help numerous small businesses make the best financial decisions for each of their individual and unique businesses.

Maryland will foster sustainability and benefit from outcomes of these investments, in terms of the economic, environmental and community impacts. The proposal seeks to overall facilitate small businesses in the transition from fossil fuel emitting energy consumption to adoption of clean energy, electrification, energy storage and efficient management solutions to reduce demand.

4. **The General Assembly with the state should develop and implement comprehensive workforce transition plan and associated programs.**

The EIRWG submits this recommendation to emphasize the importance of this topic and as direction to the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC) and the General Assembly. The EIRWG will also continue to expand on the recommendation in a white paper to be presented to the MCCC in January 2025.

The General Assembly should support the State, including the Maryland Department of Labor, in the creation and implementation of a workforce transition plan to address the growing and changing labor needs of the energy sector. Implement programs to train, retrain and re-skill workers, prioritizing workers affected by facility closures in nonrenewable energy sectors. This should include partnerships with community colleges and vocational schools to offer relevant courses and certifications in renewable energy technologies, as well as state and local government partnerships to offer job placement services and financial support during the transition. Workers in nonrenewable energy industries are likely to face job losses. Retraining and job placement services will facilitate their transition, revitalize local economies, and build Maryland's clean energy economy.