

## **The Education, Communication and Outreach Working Group (ECO)**

### 2023 RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### **Recommendation 1: A Well-Funded Public Awareness Campaign**

The Education, Communication and Outreach Working Group (ECO) recognizes the paramount importance of the state informing, engaging and encouraging Marylanders to take action to achieve the state's ambitious climate goals. Participation by all Marylanders is essential.

To achieve this immense task, we strongly recommend allocating a budget of \$10 million to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to engage in a collaborative public awareness campaign designed with professional agencies. This partnership will focus on designing and executing a comprehensive educational and multi-media marketing campaign under MDE's supervision.

The primary objective of this campaign is to ensure that every Maryland resident is well-informed about available resources and incentives for transitioning to a clean and sustainable economy. The campaign's scope will encompass a wide range of initiatives, including an interactive website, media advertisements, billboards, and more. Its core focus areas are:

1. Providing easily accessible information about federal, state, and local incentives for clean energy adoption.
2. Encouraging homeowners, landlords, and residents in single and multiple dwelling buildings to explore clean energy options without imposing additional burdens on renters.
3. Raising awareness about existing programs designed to support vulnerable communities.

To ensure the campaign's effectiveness, we propose initiating it with public opinion surveys and research to determine the most effective messaging, materials, and delivery methods. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of making all information available in multiple languages and with accessibility to individuals with disabilities. We recommend that polling be conducted at intervals to measure the campaign's effectiveness and adjust for maximum impact.

MDE will collaborate with other agencies, county governments, businesses and community groups serving low-income households and the elderly to inform residents on the state's 2031 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Gas Reduction Plan. In addition, the state will provide resources on how Marylanders can apply for federal and state incentives related to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), plug-in chargers, electric retrofitting of homes and any program that is geared toward energy efficiency and climate pollution reduction.

**Recommendation 2: Advancing Climate Curriculum and School Action Plans**

ECO recommends a separate budget allocation of \$2 million to support Maryland schools in developing climate curriculum. These mandatory curricula will serve as foundational educational tools to empower students with the knowledge and skills needed to address climate challenges and prepare for a responsible adulthood. ECO recommends that a portion of lottery profits be dedicated to climate curriculum development and implementation.

Additionally, ECO recommends that a SWOT analysis be conducted by MSDE that could enable schools to create specific, measurable, and actionable climate action plans. These plans will not only promote environmental awareness but they also will guide schools in their sustainability efforts.

**Recommendation 3: Declaring "Climate Education Week"**

ECO recommends that the Maryland General Assembly proclaims the first week of April, coinciding with Earth Month, as "Climate Education Week." This annual declaration would provide a unique opportunity for state agencies, county and municipal governments, and private organizations to come together in celebration and education.

During Climate Education Week, schools, colleges, universities, and various institutions can host exceptional events, workshops, and activities that focus on climate education and action. ECO is fully committed to providing abundant resources to assist all Marylanders who wish to participate in and celebrate this week, fostering a culture of climate consciousness throughout our state.

By implementing these recommendations, our state will make significant strides toward enhancing public awareness, education, and engagement in climate action, ultimately contributing to our shared goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient future for all Marylanders.

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