****

**DC**

**Testimony to the DC City Council**

**Transportation and Environment Committee’s public hearing re:**

**B22-904, the Clean Energy Omnibus Act of 2018**

**10.9.2018**

**Dr. Annette L. Olson, co-leader of Green Neighbors DC (GNDC)**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I am going to take a different tack and start with my love/hate relationship with armadillos. First, I am the vegetarian daughter of Texas cattle ranchers, which might give you one clue as to why I live here in DC and not in Texas. I grew up with a love for cute-eared armadillos, coyotes, skunks, raccoons, and the Mexican free-tailed bat. So I became a field biologist focusing on how food, water, and shelter resources affect animal behavior, and then, through work at the National Zoo, the National Museum of Natural History, and the USGS, an environmental scientist.

Now 26 years after moving to this region, and 11 years after moving into DC itself, I am finding that I hate armadillos. Why? Because armadillos are predicted to reach DC very soon. Armadillos have been moving northward from Mexico since the 1880s, but it was always thought that anywhere with traditionally less than an -8 degree January average minimum temperature would stop them. However, since 1994, they have moved from Kansas well into Nebraska, with one sighting in S. Dakota, due to milder winters. DC doesn’t get as cold, and armadillos have already expanded to Virginia, with some sightings in Maryland.

Now I still love armadillos, and yes, they will bring some impacts to DC gardeners, and yes, to vehicles, unfortunately for the armadillos, but I hate that they illustrate climate change.

Yet they portend far worse. I visited my parents in Texas last week, and I have over 20 fire ant bites on my feet, legs, and hands. Armadillos eat fire ants and parallel the fire ant migration. Fire ants have now established in SE Virginia and have been found in Maryland. We really, really don’t want them in DC.

Unfortunately, about 40% of species are on the move in large part due to climate change. I should mention that I have a Feb 1st record, on Facebook, of being bitten by a mosquito in my DC backyard in 2012. It’s happened in January at least once since then.

Invasive species are just one aspect of climate change that will impact us in DC personally. In addition to cherry trees now blooming earlier, I am sure you have seen the graph from the US Climate Resilience Toolkit. When I moved here in ‘92, there were ~four to five 95+ degree days per year; there are currently about eight; ***in 2100, there’ll be ~83 95+ days in DC under the higher emissions scenario***. We *must* fight climate change with everything we have.

GNDC was started in 2013 by Petworth neighbors wanting to share concerns about climate change. It then became a volunteer organization, and I joined in 2014. It has the mission of helping neighbors share ideas, resources, and actions to fight climate change, and we have held seminars and market booths in northern DC on energy efficiency, solar, composting, green roofs, and bulk energy purchases. We have plunged into a freezing Potomac to raise money for climate action, and have hosted climate awareness parties.

Our listserve members and seminar attendees *want concrete ideas* for energy efficiency, recycling, and pollinators, and they have marched with GNDC on climate issues. We also have a website and social media following of about 170 followers and ~1000 readers, making local climate news and resources available.

Besides our concern on climate change for the planet as a whole, GNDC has concerns for our immediate neighborhoods:

* The established sea-level rise, yielding higher tides and flooding.
* The potential for storm surges getting past the berm and flooding metro.
* Invasive parasites and diseases.
* The massive human migration, with more housing needed.
* The coming heat – matched with lovely DC humidity.
* Intense rains flooding neighborhoods and sewers.
* The need for more air conditioning
* The vicious cycle…

This DC climate change legislation goes well beyond an amorphous world impact. *This will directly help DC survive.*

DC’s green initiatives have already helped in areas. I have utilized DC’s rebates for a green roof, a rain garden, two energy-efficient appliances, a gigantic rain barrel, and, soon, solar.

(Besides helping with energy and flooding, one strong benefit of DC’s green initiatives is the bonding with my neighbors: they watched my green roof go up and toured it, and we’ve discussed rain barrels over the fence. In fact, two long-established neighbors want our entire block to get rain barrels.)

But with intense climate change coming, DC needs comprehensive legislation. GNDC supports this omnibus bill, particularly:

**Clean Energy/Efficiency** - A strong interest of GNDC, we are grateful for access to clean energy, and we help residents learn about it. This bill’s new requirements will help, and we love the Green Bank.

**Equity** – I heard someone on the bus say she was working two jobs, six days a week. How will she be able to fight climate change? GNDC likes the emphasis on equity in the bill.

**Transportation** – Clean transportation will save us in so many ways.

This bill will provide sustainable job growth and build a remarkable, *resilient* city. I can say that, based on the “Green Neighbors” in our organization, we will be right there with you, helping fulfill these opportunities with action.

**References:**

Armadillos: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/armadillo-moves-north-across-warmer-north-america/>; <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jbi.12319>;

Fire ants: <http://www.eddmaps.org/distribution/uscounty.cfm?sub=79789>

Species on the move: <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/climate-change-species-migration-disease/>

95+ days: <https://crt-climate-explorer.nemac.org/location/?county=Washington+County&city=Washington,%20DC&fips=11001&lat=38.9502497&lon=-77.01614359999996>.

Green Neighbors DC: [www.greenneighborsdc.org](http://www.greenneighborsdc.org),

Transportation: <https://climatesteps.org/2018/08/31/mini-motorized-machines/>