

Committees: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB147, Environment - Climate Crisis Plan - Requirement

Position: Favorable

5 February 2023

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Maria Johnsonbaugh, on behalf of the University of Maryland Student Government Association. I would like to express my support of HB147 which requires each county in Maryland to prepare a climate crisis plan to address the effects of climate change.

Simply put, the citizens of our state have been through significant hardships in the past few years, most notably induced by Covid-19. In my Howard County Community, I had seen firsthand how during this crisis, many of my neighbors and schoolmates were forced to turn to community food drives and school system-provided meals to make ends meet throughout the crisis. While the worst of the pandemic is over, our people and economy are still reeling from its consequences and unless significant action is taken, we face another crisis that can pose even more catastrophic consequences, the climate crisis.

I am currently studying economics and public health, and my classes have emphasized the climate crisis, as one that poses impending threats to the health and economy of the world. As we've seen in recent years, the climate crisis has unleashed devastating natural disasters in unprecedented numbers and magnitude. Reparations are particularly expensive and cause millions of dollars of productivity lost, not to mention destroying countless lives and livelihoods in the process. Moreover, in my public health courses, we researched and identified that while the climate crisis has the potential to cause collateral economic and social damage to all individuals, it is the most vulnerable, being the poor, uneducated, women, and other historically marginalized groups, that are disproportionately impacted. In other words, the climate crisis has the potential to reverse decades of work that Marylanders and our government have made toward equality, in law and practice, for all.

The consensus that I've heard about the crisis from other college students is almost resignation. We are constantly bombarded with worst-case scenarios and word of new disasters all over the world nearly every day, attributed to climate change, but rarely are we given any word of hope, what we can do to mitigate its impacts or that significant progress, or any, is being made to combat this new situation. For instance, we feel powerless when we make small steps, like using reusable water bottles when we see enormous smoke stacks in cities release toxic gases into the atmosphere or celebrities jet all over the world in luxurious private airplanes that emit tons of CO₂. As such, there is only so much we as average citizens can do.

Climate change is an extremely complex, legitimate, and present threat to the economy and health of our people, individuals who have already been hit hard by Covid-19. As a result, we turn to you, our government, and implore you to step up and take action. With your help and support on this bill, Maryland can not only mitigate and reverse the effects of climate change, but bolster the health, economy, and society of our state as well.

I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB147.

Thank you,



Maria Johnsonbaugh

UMD Student Government Association Public Defender

mjohns70@terpmail.umd.edu