



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Samuel Desai, *Chair*  
Emily Shrieves, *Vice-Chair*  
Henry Meiser, *Secretary*

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February 21, 2023

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
241 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street, Room 241  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: HB347 | Attorney General - Climate Change Actions - Authorization**

**Position: Support**

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

Climate change is an issue that disproportionately affects my generation. Catastrophic warming and altered weather patterns will result in severe droughts, sea level rise, and quality of life reductions across the globe -- including in Maryland. Studies have highlighted the impact that this phenomenon will have across the globe. A 2020 report by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) found that Climate Change-worsened natural disasters could displace 1.2 billion people globally by 2050.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, this report also found that 1.5 billion *more* people will suffer from food insecurity assuming business-as-usual scenarios. It is clear that climate change isn't just an environmental issue, but an economic and human rights one as well. However, not all is lost. Rapid decarbonization that limits average temperature warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels will reduce overall mortality and better the lives of Marylanders.

**HB 347** continues the climate-friendly trend set by the 2022 Maryland Climate Solutions Now Act (CNSA). It allows Maryland's attorney general to investigate, and hire outside counsel to sue large

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace. "Over one billion people at threat of being displaced by 2050 due to environmental change, conflict and civil unrest." News release. September 9, 2020. Accessed February 20, 2023.

<https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Ecological-Threat-Register-Press-Release-27.08-FINAL.pdf>.

companies for causing climate change. This way, companies can pay the price for significant environmental damages. This key piece of legislation will assist the State in meeting the ambitious 2045 net-zero emissions goal set in the CSNA.<sup>2</sup> Previously, legal action, such as seen with Volkswagen's infamous "diesel gate" scandal, has resulted in environmental progress. In the settlement, Volkswagen was required to spend 2 billion dollars to create a nationwide EV charging network.<sup>3</sup> A precedent has been set for corporations responsible for climate damages to fix them, **HB 347** will catalyze further investigation and lawsuits which will lead to more climate-conscious settlements. The Council has voted in favor of **HB 347** as it aligns with our legislative platform including:

- a. Supporting local and youth-led climate initiatives (Section B) and,
- b. Protecting the health of communities (Section A).

Furthermore, **HB 347** will support racial justice; those most at risk from climate change effects are marginalized communities of color. A 2021 EPA report found that Black and African American individuals are 59% more likely to live in areas with the highest estimated increases in extreme temperature deaths.<sup>4</sup>

Some critics argue that **HB 347** will damage Maryland's economy. Suing large corporations will, allegedly, increase consumer costs and hurt poor communities; however, the reverse is likely to happen. Monetary compensation is likely to be passed onto disadvantaged communities through legal proceedings. We have seen the negative effects of the fossil-fuel economy on the consumer. From health consequences to low quality of life, it is evident that this legislation is helping disadvantaged communities recover from the status quo.

By allowing for investigation of climate change-causing corporations, Maryland will meet climate goals, protect communities, and close the racial wealth gap. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB347** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,



Samuel Desai, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

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<sup>2</sup> Maryland 2022 SB0528 (Climate Solutions Now Act)  
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/bills/sb/sb0528E.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Eisenstein, Paul A. "VW's \$2 Billion Penalty for Diesel Scam, Electrify America, Builds Electric Charging Network across US to Boost EV Market." CNBC, May 10, 2019.  
<https://www.cnbc.com/2019/05/10/vws-2-billion-penalty-for-diesel-scam-builds-ev-charging-network-across-us.html>.

<sup>4</sup> US EPA, OA. "EPA Report Shows Disproportionate Impacts of Climate Change on Socially Vulnerable Populations in the United States." News Release, September 2, 2021.  
<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-report-shows-disproportionate-impacts-climate-change-socially-vulnerable>.