

Testimony in Support HB1438 - Responding to Emergency Needs From Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act of 2024

House Economic Matters Committee

As an individual, I urge a favorable report on HB1438. I'm a clinical social worker and environmentalist from Montgomery county (MD). I studied global environmental health and sustainability as my concentration during my master's in public health at Johns Hopkins in 2022.

For my practicum, I coded interviews of individuals who experienced hurricanes and how they, as a community, came together to help each other recover. As is well documented, climate scientists forecast that hurricanes and natural disasters are only going to be more frequent and more severe in the future. When greenhouse gasses trap heat in the atmosphere, much of this heat is absorbed by the ocean. Since hurricanes form over the ocean and gather power from there, warmer ocean temperatures increase both storm strength and how rapidly storms grow. We need to take steps to make Maryland more resilient and put aside funds that can be used to help communities recover from the climate difficulties, such as heavy rains, stronger tides, and extreme heat. We also need to target underserved communities as this bill does.

Corporations have blocked progress on climate mitigation action for their own self-interests for too long. They have hired lobbyists to push for bills that will help corporations make the most profit. They have also donated to certain politicians and funded studies that are aligned with their own interests. It is time for these corporations to pay for their own externalities. The corporations indicated in this bill have emitted more than 1 billion tons of carbon dioxide in the years between 2000 and 2020. Billions of people are going to be affected by these emissions. This bill provides an elegant solution because the costs of life-saving infrastructure for extreme weather in the future, will not be shouldered by voters but by the polluters. The fees from this bill will not be passed on to consumers because of market pressures and competition with other gas companies who are in the market but not paying this fee. Finally, this legislation will provide motivation for fossil fuels companies to innovate and move towards renewable energy, enticed by the lowering costs of renewable energy due to scales of economy and subsidies. As we make the shift to a sustainable energy, fossil fuel companies need to start or continue to invest in renewable energy sources. That is the way forward for humanity to work together in the context of climate change. This bill is incredibly wide-reaching and is an important way for the Maryland Legislature to lead the country at this crucial time.