



HB516

Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act
Testimony before House Economic Matters Committee
February 29, 2024
Position: Favorable

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and members of the committee, my name is Peter Alexander and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of HB516**, the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ). We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Fennell and several of her colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation.

The impact of the climate crisis is evident everyday if we watch the nightly news. Destructive flooding, deadly, oppressive heat waves, and unhealthy polluted air are wreaking havoc in our communities. Sadly, the effects of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and other toxic pollutants from fossil fuel combustion are disproportionately affecting historically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act will take a huge step forward in addressing the GHG emissions reduction targets set forth in the 2022 Climate Solutions Now Act while **bringing in billions of dollars** to the Maryland state budget. The bill requires that the polluters pay the costs of GHG emissions with a no-passthrough provision by creating fuel fees for both transportation and non-transportation fossil fuels. These “producer responsibility” fees will bring in up to **\$1.7 Billion per year**, totaling more than \$18 Billion by 2034.

HB516 establishes two separate funds for green infrastructure and household benefits. Half of the collected fee will go to the **Infrastructure Fund**. Of that, at least 50% of the Infrastructure Fund will be dedicated to projects located in and directly benefiting environmental justice communities. The remainder of this fund will be distributed to county and municipal government for planning and implementation of climate mitigation and resilience projects. The **Benefits Fund** which will comprise the other 50% of the incoming fees will be directed to LMI and **overburdened and underserved households**, and energy-intensive trade-exposed (EITE) businesses to protect them from financial harm, with 80% going to households and 20% going to EITE business.

The **CCEJ is a Win-Win for Maryland residents**, helping to repair and prevent further damage to our environment while bringing in billions of producer responsibility dollars to pay for the work.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

Peter Alexander, PhD
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