



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 516

Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act of 2024

Date: February 29, 2024

To: Economic Matters Committee

Environment & Transportation Committee

Position:

Favorable

From:

Matt Stegman

MD Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 516, which establishes the Climate Crisis Initiative within the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The Climate Crisis Initiative would study and assess greenhouse gas pollution fees. These fees would be deposited into separate special funds, one to support clean energy infrastructure throughout the state, and one to ensure an equitable allocation of the cost of greenhouse gas pollution fees.

Taxpayers across Maryland are already paying the price for climate change: crucial infrastructure adjustments exacerbate the state's projected budget shortfall, as legislators must address increased temperatures, flooding, and impacts on the state's crops, livestock, and wildlife. 40 years ago, 9 inches of rain was considered a hundred-year rainfall event. Today, that amount is predicted to occur once in a decade. But these are just statistical probabilities: "hundred-year" storms are now commonplace and few storm water management systems across the state have been engineered to handle this increased precipitation. The state is also experiencing record high tides, even on sunny days, along its 3,000+ miles of tidal coastland. These tides meet inadequate stormwater drainage systems and cause persistent and worsening flooding in low-lying residential areas—home to many of the state's underserved and overburdened communities.

Hotter temperatures impact people by way of increased air conditioning bills in homes, schools, and public spaces, not to mention increased instances of heat-induced illnesses and deaths. They also stress sensitive fish and invertebrate species in all of Maryland's waters. These species hold critical roles in Maryland's recreational opportunities, in the seafood industry, and in the heart of the Chesapeake Bay and other natural spaces that make this state special. To protect the people and places that Marylanders hold dear, the state must make necessary infrastructure investments to adapt to these new extremes. These investments will make Maryland a cleaner, safer, and more affordable place to live. They will create jobs and help prevent disasters from ruining homes and workspaces. HB 516 proposes a fair and equitable mechanism to make the crucial investments required to move Maryland to a climate-resilient future.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 516.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.