



HB1438

**Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather
(RENEW Act)**

Testimony before House Economic Matters Committee

March 7, 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 HB1438, Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act. We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo and many of his colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation.

Every day in the news we hear about the effects of extreme weather in Maryland and across the county. Heavy rains bring 1000-year flooding ever few years, while few of Maryland's storm water management systems are equipped to handle it. Sea level rise and tidal flooding are claiming increasing amounts of farm and other land all along Maryland's 3,000 miles of tidal shoreline. Repairing flood damage and mitigating the effects of future floods is costing Maryland taxpayers 100s of millions of dollars. A flood mitigation tunnel in Ellicott City is costing Howard County residents \$228 million, alone.

Heat waves are affecting our health and wellbeing and occur twice as frequently as in 1970. Public buildings that never previously needed air conditioning, are now at times, unable to operate. AC systems in the schools cannot handle these heat waves, forcing them to close for "heat days". Ensuring every public school in Maryland has an adequate AC system will cost Maryland over \$700 million. And that is just the schools.

The RENEW Act will bring new revenue into the state by charging large, out of state fossil fuel companies a one-time penalty for their historical emissions without burdening Maryland taxpayers. Forty petrochemical companies will be required to pay Maryland \$900 million a year for ten years, with 40% of revenues going to overburdened, underserved communities.

It is time that oil and gas companies start paying the costs we incur because of fossil fuel use.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

Peter Alexander, PhD
Woodbine, MD