



Testimony Supporting HB1438
Responding to Emergency Needs From Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act of 2024
Economic Matters, Environment, and Transportation Committee
Thursday, March 7, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sonia Demiray, I am the co-founder of the Climate Communications Coalition, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, the Climate Forests Campaign, Eastern Forests Advocacy Group – among others-, and a resident of Frederick County.

Requiring big polluters, who have knowingly harmed our climate and our environment, to pay a tiny portion- a fraction of 1% of their profits- to help remedy the consequences of their actions, is a logical step. Frankly, we should consider increasing the percentage of the profits taken: one fifth of one percent of these behemoth companies' annual profits is less than a slap on the wrist. After all, cleaning up after yourself is not just a social norm, it can also be legally enforced as a crime or a tort. This also applies to climate change: the extreme weather patterns and temperatures that we are witnessing today were predicted since the 1970's or earlier. Yet these same companies hid the data, lied to the public, and continued to rake in growing profits. And they continue to do so today.

This bill is popular in Maryland because it is not only logical and fair, it also impedes polluters from passing this cost on to their customers. In addition, it would raise around \$9 billion which could help solve the current funding problems largely caused by the polluters: Maryland is struggling to build up climate-resiliency, to heal the damage caused to our communities, and to protect communities, fauna, and flora from further harm caused by them. They must pay for the consequences of their actions.

If there were an amendment to this bill, we suggest confiscating their advertising, media, and communications budgets: these companies continue to pollute our air, waters and soils at the same time that they're funding massive advertising campaigns to dissemble the truth and confuse the public. The biggest polluters are positioning themselves as 'clean energy' or 'leading the way in clean energy research.' We suggest confiscating any portion of their production, media, and outreach budgets that would reach Maryland audiences, and use these funds to provide truthful and data-driven information about the climate emergency. In addition, these funds would pay for public service campaigns and trainings that generate resiliency in our communities and ready them for the impact of a climate emergency that the big polluters have created.

Thank you for this bill, please vote favorably on HB1438.

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