

Submission date 2/27/2024

HEARING DATE: 2/29/2024

BILL: HB-516

TITLE: Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ)

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters Committee

Dear Members of the Committee:

My name is Judith Allen-Leventhal, and I live in Maryland Legislative District 26. I support HB-516, the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act of 2024 (CCEJ).

Maryland voters, special interest groups, and elected officials overwhelmingly agreed to focus on practical solutions like reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. Now, the focus needs to be on the mechanisms to fund the programming necessary to sustain the physical infrastructure and livelihood of Marylanders. The CCEJ's emphasis on highlighting the root cause of climate change - the influx of harmful air pollutants, primarily from fossil fuels used in transit and heating industries - will do just that.

Equally important is recognizing the need to prioritize disproportionately affected communities, ensuring that the benefits of climate action are accessible to those most impacted. The innovative approach of creating two funds from the revenue generated from the transit and heating fee will do that. The Household and Employer Benefit Fund and the Climate Crisis Infrastructure Fund were created to address both economic and environmental aspects of climate change while keeping aligned with the Justice40 Initiative. These funds not only protect disproportionately affected households and energy-intensive, trade-exposed employers, they also invest in the improvement of the health and welfare of Maryland taxpayers. The inclusion of a "polluter pays" provision without passing fees to end-users, is a crucial step towards environmental justice and protection of Maryland's most vulnerable citizens.

The CCEJ offers Maryland a commonsense, practical pathway toward a more sustainable economy because it will generate significant income – estimated at \$18 billion -- by 2034 for investment in clean energy infrastructure while providing protective benefits to Maryland's trade-exposed small businesses and the most vulnerable populations: low- and moderate-income and overburdened and underserved households.

I respectfully urge a favorable committee report on HB 615. By supporting this legislation, you will contribute to Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goals, promote environmental justice, and fortify our state against the impacts of climate change.

Respectfully submitted,
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