



**Testimony Before the Senate Education, Environment and Energy Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 958 – The RENEW Act
By Vincent DeMarco, Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative**

February 20, 2024

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Education, Environment and Energy Committee, on behalf of the Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative, I am here to support, SB 958, the Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act. We commend Senator Katie Fry Hester for sponsoring this legislation. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act and to the leadership of the Maryland General Assembly, our state has made great strides in expanding health care coverage, reducing the percentage of our people without health insurance from 13% to 6% in the last few years. We have also worked hard to reduce unconscionable health disparities in our state, including by enacting the Health Equity Resource Communities Act of 2021. But, as Governor Wes Moore said in his Inaugural address, we must do all we can to expand coverage to the hundreds of thousands of our fellow Marylanders still without health care coverage and achieve health equity. We can only accomplish these goals with a new revenue source which would fund our goal of health equity for all Marylanders. Because SB 958 allocates a portion of the proceeds from this program to reduce climate and health disparities, we strongly urge you to pass this life saving measure. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our individual organization, Maryland Citizens’ Health Initiative, Inc., because we have not reviewed this legislation with our entire Maryland Health Care For All! Coalition.