



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 958 - The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act

TO: Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee and Chair Beidle and members of the Finance Committee
FROM: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate, Climate Change
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Heavier rains, higher tides, and record heat are damaging lives and infrastructure across Maryland today. **SB 958 - The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act** will make the necessary investments to prepare for—and recover from—worsening extreme weather events. This is why the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports this legislation.

Right now, taxpayers across Maryland are paying the costs of climate change—which are adding up and contributing to the state’s projected budget shortfall—while large, out-of-state fossil fuel companies are reaping all the benefits. The RENEW Act will bring new revenue into the state—without making a single Marylander pay an additional cent—by charging these companies a one time penalty for their historical emissions.

We can’t afford NOT to support this bill.

The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Two Principles are particularly relevant: The Second Principle, *Justice, equity and compassion in human relations* and the Seventh Principle, *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*.

Unitarian Universalists believe in *justice, equity and compassion in human relations*. We know that Global Climate Change impacts marginalized communities first and worst, AND investments in those communities for climate resilience and adaptation will be last. Forty percent of all the investments made by the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Fund are required to go to overburdened, underserved communities, as defined by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. This is in keeping with President Biden’s Justice 40 initiative to ensure 40% of all climate spending goes to disadvantaged communities. The combustion of fossil fuels is causing climate change, and the same communities who have benefited the least from—and have been harmed the most by—fossil fuels are now being hit *first and worst* by the impacts of climate change.

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Unitarian Universalists believe that we should all have *Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. 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, more resilient, and more affordable place to live. They will create jobs and help prevent disasters from ruining homes and workspaces. The RENEW Act will provide the funds to make these necessary investments. It would raise \$900 million a year for 10 years and provide the dollars the state needs to build new drainage systems, upgrade HVACs in public buildings, recover when disaster strikes, and much more. The funds would go to the comprehensive flood management program, the zero-emission school bus transition fund, the State Disaster Recovery Fund, the Strategic Energy Investment Fund, the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, shoreline protection projects, the Resilient Maryland Revolving Loan Fund, the Whole Home Program, and other programs that are already doing the work of preparing Maryland for more extreme weather.

To survive climate change, Maryland needs new revenue. The RENEW Act can provide these necessary funds without making Marylanders bear the financial burden. Maryland should waste no time in passing the RENEW Act and collecting funds from out of state energy companies and investing those funds in building a better Maryland.

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