

HOUSE BILL 572

M5, M3, E4

6lr2105

CF 6lr2107

By: **Delegates Ruth, Terrasa, Allen, Bagnall, Behler, Boafo, Charkoudian, Embry, Fair, Feldmark, Foley, Healey, Hill, Ivey, A. Johnson, Kaufman, Korman, Lehman, Lewis, Martinez, McCaskill, Moreno, Odom, Palakovich Carr, Rosenberg, Ruff, Simmons, Spiegel, Stein, Stewart, Vogel, White Holland, and Wims**

Introduced and read first time: January 28, 2026

Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes Accountability Fund**
3 **(Climate Crimes Accountability Act)**

4 FOR the purpose of authorizing the Attorney General to investigate, commence, and
5 prosecute or defend any suit or action that holds certain entities accountable for
6 tortious or otherwise unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change;
7 authorizing the Attorney General to hire outside counsel to assist with an action
8 under this Act if the Attorney General makes a certain determination; establishing
9 the Climate Crimes Accountability Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund; requiring
10 interest earnings of the Fund to be credited to the Fund; and generally relating to
11 climate change.

12 BY adding to

13 Article – Environment

14 Section 1–307

15 Annotated Code of Maryland

16 (2013 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

17 BY adding to

18 Article – Public Safety

19 Section 14–1401 and 14–1402 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 14. Climate
20 Crimes Accountability Fund”

21 Annotated Code of Maryland

22 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

23 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

24 Article – State Finance and Procurement

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



Section 6-226(a)(2)(i) and (ii)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

4 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
5 Article – State Finance and Procurement
6 Section 6–226(a)(2)(iii)212. and 213.
7 Annotated Code of Maryland
8 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

9 BY adding to
10 Article – State Finance and Procurement
11 Section 6–226(a)(2)(iii)214.
12 Annotated Code of Maryland
13 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

14 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
15 Article – State Government
16 Section 6–106.2
17 Annotated Code of Maryland
18 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Sup)

19 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
20 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Environment

22 1-307.

23 (A) IN THIS SECTION, "MARKET CAPITALIZATION" MEANS THE TOTAL
24 MARKET VALUE OF A COMPANY'S OUTSTANDING SHARES OF STOCK.

25 (B) FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE STATE'S
26 CITIZENS AND ENVIRONMENT, IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT
27 A PUBLICLY TRADED ENTITY, INCLUDING ITS SUBSIDIARIES, WITH A CUMULATIVE
28 MARKET CAPITALIZATION GREATER THAN \$1,000,000,000 THAT IS OR WAS
29 INVOLVED IN EXTRACTING, REFINING, OR PROCESSING COAL, OIL, OR GAS BE HELD
30 ACCOUNTABLE FOR ANY TORTIOUS OR OTHERWISE UNLAWFUL CONDUCT ON THE
31 PART OF THE ENTITY OR SUBSIDIARY THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO CLIMATE
32 CHANGE, INCLUDING ASSOCIATED ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER HARMS CAUSED,
33 WHETHER THROUGH FRAUD, DECEPTION, OR ANY OTHER MECHANISM, ACTION,
34 INACTION, OR PRACTICE.

35 (C) THE ATTORNEY GENERAL MAY INVESTIGATE, COMMENCE, AND
36 PROSECUTE OR DEFEND ANY CIVIL OR CRIMINAL SUIT OR ACTION THAT HOLDS

1 ACCOUNTABLE A PUBLICLY TRADED ENTITY, INCLUDING ITS SUBSIDIARIES, WITH A
2 CUMULATIVE MARKET CAPITALIZATION GREATER THAN \$1,000,000,000 AT THE
3 TIME A SUIT OR AN ACTION IS FILED THAT IS OR WAS INVOLVED IN EXTRACTING,
4 REFINING, OR PROCESSING COAL, OIL, OR GAS FOR ANY TORTIOUS OR OTHERWISE
5 UNLAWFUL CONDUCT ON THE PART OF THE ENTITY OR SUBSIDIARY THAT HAS
6 CONTRIBUTED TO CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH FRAUD, DECEPTION, OR ANY OTHER
7 MECHANISM, ACTION, INACTION, OR PRACTICE.

8 (D) THE ATTORNEY GENERAL MAY HIRE OUTSIDE COUNSEL TO ASSIST
9 WITH AN ACTION UNDER THIS SECTION IF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL DETERMINES
10 THAT HIRING OUTSIDE COUNSEL IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE STATE.

11 (E) THE PROVISIONS OF § 6-106.2 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE
12 SHALL APPLY TO ANY ACTION BROUGHT BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL UNDER THIS
13 SECTION.

14 **Article – Public Safety**

15 **SUBTITLE 14. CLIMATE CRIMES ACCOUNTABILITY FUND.**

16 **14-1401.**

17 (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
18 INDICATED.

19 (B) “FUND” MEANS THE CLIMATE CRIMES ACCOUNTABILITY FUND.

20 (C) “SALTWATER INTRUSION” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 3-1001 OF
21 THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE.

22 (D) “VECTORBORNE PATHOGEN” MEANS A GERM OR PARASITE THAT IS
23 SPREAD TO HUMANS AND OTHER ANIMALS BY A VECTOR, SUCH AS A MOSQUITO,
24 TICK, OR FLEA.

25 (E) “WATERBORNE PATHOGEN” MEANS A MICROORGANISM, SUCH AS
26 BACTERIA, A VIRUS, A PARASITE, OR AN AMOEBA, THAT CAN CAUSE ILLNESS IN
27 HUMANS AND ANIMALS IF EXPOSED TO WATER CONTAMINATED BY THE
28 MICROORGANISM.

29 **14-1402.**

30 (A) THERE IS A CLIMATE CRIMES ACCOUNTABILITY FUND.

31 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO PAY FOR PROGRAMS THAT PREVENT,

1 MITIGATE, OR REPAIR HARMS CAUSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE.

2 (C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE FUND.

3 (D) (1) THE FUND IS A SPECIAL, NONLAPSING FUND THAT IS NOT
4 SUBJECT TO § 7-302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

5 (2) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD THE FUND SEPARATELY,
6 AND THE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.

7 (E) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

8 (1) ALL REVENUES RECEIVED BY THE STATE RESULTING DIRECTLY
9 OR INDIRECTLY FROM ANY JUDGMENT AGAINST OR SETTLEMENT WITH AN ENTITY
10 IN AN ACTION BROUGHT UNDER § 1-307 OF THE ENVIRONMENT ARTICLE;

11 (2) INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND; AND

12 (3) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED FOR
13 THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND.

14 (F) THE FUND MAY BE USED ONLY TO:

15 (1) PAY FOR PROGRAMS THAT PREVENT, MITIGATE, OR REPAIR
16 HARMS CAUSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE, INCLUDING PROGRAMS ADDRESSING:

17 (I) AIR POLLUTION;

18 (II) DANGEROUSLY HIGH TEMPERATURES, SUCH AS URBAN
19 HEAT ISLANDS OR EXTENDED HEAT WAVES;

20 (III) DROUGHT;

21 (IV) ECOSYSTEM CHANGES;

22 (V) FLOODING;

23 (VI) SALTWATER INTRUSION;

24 (VII) STORM DAMAGE;

25 (VIII) VECTORBORNE PATHOGENS;

(IX) WATERBORNE PATHOGENS; AND

(X) WILDFIRES;

**(2) PAY FOR EXPENSES RELATED TO ANY ACTION BROUGHT BY THE
GENERAL UNDER § 1-307 OF THE ENVIRONMENT ARTICLE, INCLUDING:**

(I) INVESTIGATION EXPENSES;

(II) LITIGATION EXPENSES; AND

(III) TRIAL PREPARATION EXPENSES; AND

(3) PAY ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES RELATED TO THE DISTRIBUTION TO PROGRAMS UNDER ITEM (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

10 (G) (1) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL INVEST THE MONEY OF THE FUND
11 IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.

12 (2) ANY INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE CREDITED TO
13 THE FUND.

14 (H) EXPENDITURES FROM THE FUND MAY BE MADE ONLY IN ACCORDANCE
15 WITH THE STATE BUDGET.

16 (I) MONEY EXPENDED FROM THE FUND FOR PROGRAMS THAT PREVENT,
17 MITIGATE, OR REPAIR HARMS CAUSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE IS SUPPLEMENTAL TO
18 AND IS NOT INTENDED TO TAKE THE PLACE OF FUNDING THAT OTHERWISE WOULD
19 BE APPROPRIATED FOR THE PROGRAMS.

Article – State Finance and Procurement

21 6-226.

(a) (2) (i) This paragraph does not apply in fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

1 (iii) The provisions of subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph do not
2 apply to the following funds:

5 213. the Population Health Improvement Fund; AND

214. THE CLIMATE CRIMES ACCOUNTABILITY FUND.

Article – State Government

8 6-106.2.

9 (a) This section applies to:

16 (b) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) "Proportionate share of liability" means the percentage of comparative responsibility assigned by a judge or jury to a settling party in accordance with this section.

19 (3) "Responsible person" means a person alleged to be liable in an action
20 governed by this section.

21 (c) In an action governed by this section, the judge or jury shall:

22 (1) make a determination of the total liability, including damages, costs,
23 and any other available relief;

24 (2) assign comparative responsibility to each party joined in the action,
25 including all defendants, third-party defendants, intervenors, and any other named party,
26 based on the party's relative degree of fault or responsibility for the total liability; and

27 (3) if equity requires, determine the liability of a group of related persons
28 on a collective basis.

4 (1) continue to pursue an action against any other responsible person who
5 has not resolved the person's liability to the State; or

6 (2) bring a new action against any other responsible person who has not
7 resolved the person's liability to the State.

8 (e) Notwithstanding any other provision of State law:

(1) the Maryland Uniform Contribution Among Joint Tort-Feasors Act under Title 3, Subtitle 14 of the Courts Article does not apply to an action governed by this section;

(3) a settlement of an action governed by this section that resolves the liability of a responsible person:

18 (i) does not release from liability any other responsible person
19 except as specifically provided in the terms of the settlement; but

20 (ii) reduces the potential liability of all other responsible persons
21 liable in whole or in part by the larger of:

22 1. the settling person's proportionate share of liability; or

23 2. the amount the se

24 (f) This section may not be construed to:

25 (1) impair any express contractual rights

26 (2) create new types of actions or claims;

27 (3) alter the burden of proof, causation standard, or elements of an action

29 (4) grant authority to the State or the Attorney General to bring actions or

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1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
2 1, 2026.