

Oral Testimony  
Annalisa Jenkins

HB 517

Good afternoon committee members, it means a lot to me to be here to speak for House Bill 517. I am Annalisa Jenkins, and I am a high school sophomore in Baltimore. This time of life and coming into myself is very exciting as I begin to think about what my future might look like. I often find myself trying to see myself in the future, what job will I have, what will my family look like? But then I get stuck. How can I consider what career path to take when I have no idea what shape the world will be in? What animals will my children not learn the sounds of, what beaches and towns will no longer exist to show them, what quality of life would I be condemning my children to, would it even be worth it to have kids? I have always wanted to have children, but I actually wonder now. And then I remember that, for some people, these crushing, demoralizing problems are not of the future, but of the present. My privilege has set me up so that, for a time, the social systems will assure that I am safe. The effects probably won't hit me first. But there are people right now, people of color and people of limited resources who are already suffering disproportionately from asthma and cancer. People who live on islands and in coastal cities, who aren't worried about losing a summer vacation to sea level rises, but their homes and everything they know.

I think about these problems a lot. I feel the crushing, overwhelming hopelessness that comes with thinking about my future. It seems that much of my generation is lost in this despair, because it feels like nothing we do will actually change the course of this self fulfilling prophecy. But this is what makes this amendment so exciting. This bill is not like the ban the straw campaigns we do at school, this amendment could actually change the lives of countless Marylanders. By voting to put this amendment in place, you are showing that you care about my generation, you care about the people suffering in Baltimore city, you care about your state and the animals and plants that live in it. But not just that you care, that you are willing to actually make a difference. This is not about what party you represent, this is about whether or not you care about your constituents. So please pass this bill out of committee and let me hope again, dream again, and trust in adults again.