

**McKay Jenkins**  
**203 South Tyrone Rd**  
**Baltimore, MD 21212**

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 517**

To: Maryland House Environment & Transportation Committee

Date: February 19, 2020

Re: HB 517: Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights (Del. Stewart)

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

Please accept this testimony in support of House Bill 517. I am a longtime resident of Baltimore, and a professor of environmental studies with 25 years of experience teaching at the University of Delaware, where I mentor hundreds of students a year who live within the Chesapeake Bay and Delaware River watersheds.

I want you to understand something loud and clear: our young people are suffering from a generational despair that is absolutely palpable in the classroom. It is no secret that the collective mental health of our young people is in precipitous decline, and that their vision of the future is quantifiably different than it was for their predecessors.

It is my vivid and unshakeable conviction that this despair has been triggered in large part by a collective sense of collapse: the collapse of ecosystems, the collapse of social systems, and — perhaps most disheartening — the collapse of anything like a moral response to the clear and present dangers presented by human-caused changes in our climate.

Make no mistake: our young people see right through the industry-sponsored disinformation campaigns that have contaminated our political discourse about climate change. They are under no illusions about what (and who) has caused these dangerous trends, or the shockingly disingenuous efforts to deceive the public (and manipulate elected officials) about its origins, or its solutions.

With the fossil fuel, chemical and agricultural industries hiding behind a (literally) well-oiled public relations machine, it is you, our democratically elected policy makers, who must stand up and make a morally courageous commitment to reverse decades of short-sighted profiteering that has dearly cost our environmental, economic and cultural systems. With this bill, you have a chance to make a marked contribution to a global movement that seeks a return our world to ecological balance, or to do the wrong thing and be condemned by history and tossed from office in favor of someone who will.

Sincerely,

McKay Jenkins

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