



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**House BILL 0171
Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ)
Economic Matters & Environment and Transportation Committees– March 10, 2022
SUPPORT**

Dear Members of the Economic Matters & Environment and Transportation Committees:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB0171. The bill will establish greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals and assess GHG pollution fees and would distribute those benefits to households and employers in the State to mitigate the impact of fees under the initiative. The bill also funds activities for GHG reduction and sequestration, improvements in resiliency infrastructure, and the promotion of a just economic transition in the State.

Exposure to pollutants caused by the combustion of fossil fuels (carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, lead, hydrocarbons, and particulate matter) bears significant negative impacts on public health, including, and importantly, school age children's test scores, as certain pollutants have neuro toxic characteristics (e.g., lead contamination from diesel engine emissions).

Research on the effects of children's learning ability shows us that maintaining lower air pollution levels by 20% could improve the development of a child's working memory by 6.1%, the equivalent of four weeks extra learning time per year. Further, air pollution from burning fossil fuels is contributing to, and in certain cases worsening, cardio-pulmonary illnesses such as heart disease, asthma, lung disease, and cancer. The particulates in air pollution are a serious threat for pregnant women and the health of their babies. Reducing GHGs has been shown to dramatically improve air quality. Thus, we must transition to a clean economy sooner rather than later.

Presently our economy is driven by a product that is detrimental to our existence. Burning fossil fuel is warming our earth and causing all manner of environmental and weather pattern havoc. Leading economists and scientists around the world agree that putting a price on carbon is one of our best tools to deal with the changing climate.

More importantly, the CCEJ would give back to communities that have been harmed the most through two essential funding mechanisms: the Household and Employer Benefit Fund, and the Climate Crisis Infrastructure Fund. These funds would redistribute all fees assessed on fossil fuels that enter Maryland to:



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- (1) provide a high degree of protection for low- and moderate-income households in the State and protect energy intensive trade-exposed employers in the State, and
- (2) invest in clean energy and resiliency initiatives that improve the health and welfare of Marylanders, with particular emphasis on developing resilient infrastructure in underserved communities and protecting communities with high exposure to pollutants.

In essence, the CCEJ provides funds for low- and moderate-income families as well as local governments to create and implement climate action plans to reduce GHG emissions. Even more importantly, money distributed from the Household Benefit Account is not taxable income and excluded from household income for the purposes of determining eligibility for, or the level of, any form of public assistance.

Investments from the Climate Crisis Infrastructure Fund must also be designed to create local economic development and employment in the State. At least 50% of the money must be invested in projects that are located within and provide meaningful benefits to environmental justice populations. Finally, up to 5% of the money in the fund may also be used to provide technical assistance, capacity, and planning tools to local governments, as specified.

This bill is Maryland's economic solution to our climate problem. It provides the funding needed for resiliency and supports the most vulnerable people and businesses as we make the necessary transition from a fossil fuel economy to a sustainable economy.

This bill is clear about what it will accomplish and how it will work. For these reasons, the WDC urges a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB0171.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President