



**Committee:** House Economic Matters  
**Testimony on:** HB171 - Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act  
**Organization:** Greenbelt Climate Action Network  
**Submitting:** James Lawson  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** March 10 at 1:00 p.m.

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

The Greenbelt Climate Action Network (GCAN) is writing in support of **HB171 - Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act**. GCAN's mission is to educate residents about climate change, "systemic" solutions, how they can change their behaviors to be more sustainable, and take personal, local, systemic, and political action.

HB171 - Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act will make considerable progress to a decarbonized future that will reduce the amount of GHGs that accelerate climate change. Net-zero carbon emissions mean that we stop burning fossil fuels and use solar, wind, and other energy sources that do not release GHGs.

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil, and gas) which produces heat-trapping gases. - The United Nations

If the world is to prevent climate change, we must get to net-zero carbons emissions, which requires every citizen to change their way of life. Net-zero carbons emissions will require sacrifice from everyone. It will be challenging to get people to stop doing what they have done for centuries if we impose a significant drop in people's standard of living. This bill is not coercive and does not mandate draconian measures that will invite resistance. This bill sets reasonable goals and timelines to shift to renewable forms of energy. This bill provides time to adapt to the bill goals by 2040 when statewide greenhouse gas emissions are net negative.

All credible experts believe wind and solar energy will be cheaper than fossil fuels in the future. When the citizens of Maryland discover that renewable energy is more affordable than fossil fuels and does not damage their health, their resistance will dissipate. Unfortunately, low-income people are more negatively affected by climate change than those who have the income to adapt to climate change. This bill has carrots and a small stick.

**This bill imposes a greenhouse gas pollution fee on certain fuels.** This provision will remove the subsidy to coal, oil, and gas producers. The money collected will go to helping low-income people shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

This bill only applies to the State of Maryland. If we make this bill law, it will encourage other states to pass similar legislation. This bill is one of the most important bills you will vote on this year.

"This legislation will require the State to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through various measures, including altering statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction requirements so that after 2040 statewide greenhouse gas emissions are net negative; requiring the Department of the Environment to adopt a plan for the reduction of statewide greenhouse gas emissions by December 31, 2022; establishing a Climate Crisis Council to develop a plan to meet the reduction targets set out in the Act; and establishing a greenhouse gas pollution fee on certain fuels." – HB171 - Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act

This bill has many upsides and no downsides. People can adapt to change when it happens over ten years. People can adapt to change when it does not create an unbearable cost to their standard of living. If we do nothing one day, the effects of climate change will be so intolerable, and we will have to make changes overnight, and by then, it may be too late.

For all these reasons, we recommend a FAVORABLE report for **HB171 - Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act** in committee.

Sincerely,

James R. Lawson, volunteer  
Greenbelt Climate Action Network