



March 2, 2022

Delegate C. T. Wilson, Chair
House Economic Matters Committee
6 Bladen Street
House Office Building, Room 231
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB708 Comprehensive Climate Solutions
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

My name is Dr. Jon Gorman, Psy.D. I am a licensed clinical psychologist—I own a private group practice in Towson, Maryland, and I am an assistant clinical professor in the Department of Psychology at Loyola University Maryland.

I have spent the last few years consuming the latest research on the mental health impacts of the climate crisis and climate disasters. In my professional opinion, the climate crisis is the greatest mental health crisis we face.

Climate disasters such as floods, droughts, and heat waves lead to increased rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, insomnia, depression, anxiety, and violence.

Twenty percent of people who experience a climate disaster develop chronic psychological dysfunction.¹ Scores of published studies show that as the temperature rises, the suicide rate rises.² A study done at Johns Hopkins found that warming temperatures are highly correlated with violence and trauma-related admissions to the emergency department.³ Another study showed that every 1 deg C of warming over a 5-year period of time results in a 2% increase in symptoms of mental illness such as depression, stress, or difficulty managing emotions.⁴

For communities comprised predominantly of people of color, the psychological effects of the climate crisis are even more pronounced, as these communities are already vulnerable due to decades of systemic racism that have resulted in fewer greenspaces and disproportionately more polluting facilities.⁵

Children and youth are also particularly vulnerable to the mental health impacts of climate change. In a recent study, 45% of young people age 16-25 feel so anxious or afraid about the future of the environment that it has negatively impacted their daily ability to function. Over 60% of young people feel their government has not done enough about the climate.⁶ Children experience rates of PTSD after climate disasters at double the rate of adults.

¹ Dodgen et al., (2016). – The impacts of climate change on human health in the united states: A Scientific Assessment – Mental health and well-being (Chapter 8). P. 223

² Dumont, C., Haase, E., Dolber, T., Lewis, J., & Coverdale, J. (2020). Climate change and risk of completed suicide. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*, 208(7), 559-565.

³ Michel SJ, Wang H, Selvarajah S, Canner JK, Murrill M, Chi A, Efron DT, Schneider EB. Investigating the relationship between weather and violence in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. *Injury*. 2016 Jan;47(1):272-6. doi: 10.1016/j.injury.2015.07.006. Epub 2015 Jul 13. PMID: 26233631.

⁴ Obradovich, N., Migliorini, R., Paulus, M. P., & Rahwan, I. (2018). Empirical evidence of mental health risks posed by climate change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(43), 10953-10958.

⁵ Clayton, S., Manning, C. M., Speiser, M., & Hill, A. N. (2021). Mental health and our changing climate: Impacts, inequities, responses. *American Psychological Association (APA) & ecoAmerica, Washington DC*.

⁶ Hickman, C., Marks, E., Pihkala, P., Clayton, S., Lewandowski, E. R., Mayall, E. E., ... & van Susteren, L. (2021). Young people's voices on climate anxiety, government betrayal and moral injury: A global phenomenon. *Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon*.



HB 708 will decrease greenhouse gas emissions and work towards environmental justice for communities disproportionately affected by climate change. These steps are *crucial* for limiting the devastating negative mental health effects of the climate crisis. I ask for a **FAVORABLE** report.

Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information or research citations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Gorman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "G".

Jon Gorman, Psy.D.
Licensed Psychologist