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Environment and Transportation Committee

Chair
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Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB171
The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act
Testimony by Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo
March 10, 2022- The Economic Matters Committee

Climate change is real. It's happening, and it's happening now. We need to act IMMEDIATELY, not in a year, not in two years, not in three years, because by then, it will be too late. This past summer, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued their sixth special [report](#) outlining the lasting consequences of climate change: "Human induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones, and in particular, their attribution to human influence, has strengthened since the last report in 2018."ⁱ

In Maryland alone, we are increasingly seeing the impacts of climate change. Today, the State averages 10 days a year when heat exceeds dangerous levels. This is projected to increase to 40 days a year by 2050. Currently, Maryland has about 81,000 people who are at risk from coastal flooding, which is expected to increase to an additional 38,000 people by 2050 due to rising sea levels.ⁱⁱ This past October right here in Annapolis, we saw the fourth worst flooding in the city's history.ⁱⁱⁱ These events are just going to keep getting worse if we do not start getting serious about climate change now.

The byproducts of climate change, including greenhouse gas emissions, have lasting consequences on our population's health. According to the Maryland Department of Health, in 2018 there were 29,534 asthma-related emergency department visits in Maryland (52.4 per 10,000 residents); among children under

five years old, the ER visit rate was 119.4 per 10,000 residents.^{iv} These visits ended up costing the State \$27.7 billion in healthcare costs.^v In 2019, the Maryland Department of Health also reported that chronic lower respiratory diseases, which includes asthma, were the fifth leading cause of death in the State, with a mortality rate of 29.2 per 100,000 residents.^{vi} A study from 2019 of 869 counties in the U.S. found that there is a strong correlation between ozone and fine particulate pollution and respiratory ER visits among all age groups.^{vii}

That is why I am introducing the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act this year. The CCEJ Act incentivizes the reduction of fossil fuel CO2 emissions, which will generate billions of dollars for investment in clean energy infrastructure, all while providing protective benefits to Maryland's small businesses and its most vulnerable populations: low and moderate-income households. The CCEJ Act will:

- **Build on the Statewide Inventory and Emissions Reduction Plan** to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030, and 100% by 2040, using 2006 emission levels as a baseline. These goals complement existing programs like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)
- **Establish two Types of Fossil Fuel Fees** including a non-transportation fuel fee starting at \$15/ton of CO2, capped at \$60/ton until the target is met, and a transportation fuel fee starting at \$10/ton of CO2, capped at \$37/ton until the target is met
- **Create a Climate Crisis Council** in coordination with the Maryland Department of the Environment to develop a plan to achieve targets, hold periodic public meetings, administer schedules of fees, and delegate distribution of funds
- **Establishes Revenue for two Separate Funds** for green infrastructure, and household and employer benefits
 - 50% of the revenue will go to the Household Benefits Account for low and moderate-income households and the Employer Benefit Account for energy-intensive trade-exposed (EITE) businesses to protect them from financial harm
 - 50% of the revenue will go to the Climate Crisis Infrastructure fund to invest in initiatives that improve the health and welfare of Maryland citizens

The CEEJ Act will make Maryland a leader in solving climate change, and will save the Chesapeake Bay and our state's natural landscapes. I ask you for a favorable report on HB171 to ensure that Maryland continues to lead the way in finding viable solutions to successfully address the irreparable damage caused by climate change.

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- i [Sixth Assessment Report \(ipcc.ch\)](#)
 - ii [Maryland's Climate Threats | States at Risk](#)
 - iii [Flooding in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County | PHOTOS - Capital Gazette](#)
 - iv [Pages - Asthma \(maryland.gov\)](#)
 - v [Pages - Asthma \(maryland.gov\)](#)
 - vi [2019Annual.pdf \(maryland.gov\)](#)
 - vii [Age-Specific Associations of Ozone and Fine Particulate Matter with Respiratory Emergency Department Visits in the United States | American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine \(atsjournals.org\)](#)