

3/8/2022

HEARING DATE: 3/10/2022

BILL: HB0171
TITLE: Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act (CCEJ)
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters & Environment and Transportation
SPONSOR: Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo

We strongly support the 2022 Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act. Maryland is one of the states most at risk due to climate change because of its very long shoreline. In Montgomery County, we are not at risk from sea-level rise, but we share the risks from other sources of flooding, heatwaves, and other extreme weather events. We are also in an area with poor air quality and deal with increased rates of asthma and other health problems. Much of that air pollution and the greenhouse gases that cause climate change come from burning fossil fuels.

The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act does several important things to address these serious problems. The IPCC reports have made it clear that Maryland's current greenhouse gas emissions goals are insufficient. The CCEJ sets the more ambitious goals we need – a 60% reduction by 2030 and 100% by 2040.

We need those goals to avert the worst effects of climate change, but setting goals is not enough. Many economists, including Nobel laureates and all the living former chairs of the Federal Reserve, tell us that carbon pricing is the most effective tool against climate change. This bill creates fees to be paid by the polluting businesses: a transportation fuel fee that starts at \$10/ton of CO2 emissions and increases by \$3/ton/year up to \$37/ton and a non-transportation fuel fee that starts at \$15/ton and increases by \$5/ton/year up to \$60/ton.

A price on carbon is a highly effective tool, but more needs to be done. Half of the money collected would go into the Climate Crisis Infrastructure Fund to invest in projects that will improve the health and welfare of the people of Maryland by mitigating climate change and increasing resilience. At least 50% of the money in that fund would go to projects that are located in and provide meaningful benefits to environmental justice communities. Those communities bear an excessive burden from heavy traffic and polluting industries and have been neglected for far too long.

It is also essential to protect low and middle-income residents and vulnerable businesses from any harm that might come from a carbon fee. Half of the revenue collected would provide benefits to those residents and energy-intensive trade-exposed businesses.

This bill has great potential to help Maryland deal effectively with the climate crisis and to improve the wellbeing and resilience of our residents and communities. We ask you for a favorable recommendation.

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Cc: Members of the Economic Matters Committee & Environment and Transportation