



Secular Maryland

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HB 171 - SUPPORT

Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

This bill would create a Climate Crises Council with responsibility for devising plans for achieving the goals of a 60% reduction in green house emissions from 2006 levels by 2030 and net-negative emissions by 2040. A greenhouse emissions fee will be charged on all fossil fuels brought into the state for combustion in the state other than for electricity. The fees are specified in the law for transportation and non-transportation fuels. Additional fees can be charged for escaped and released methane emissions. Government provided public transportation, farm animals, and crops are exempt from the fees. A benefit fund protects low and moderate income residents and energy intensive, trade exposed employers. An infrastructure fund expands use clean energy sources, improves energy efficiency and climate change resiliency, and sequesters carbon in forests, soils, and wetlands. A Commission on a Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities will identify and assist communities with low incomes, minority status, and environmental burden.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration developed the Annual Greenhouse Gas Index ("AGGI" for short). Updated yearly, the AGGI compares the combined warming influence of the long-lived greenhouse gases—atmospheric gases that absorb and radiate heat—to their influence in 1990. They chose 1990 because that is the year that countries who signed the U.N. Kyoto Protocol agreed to use as a benchmark for their efforts to reduce emissions. By the end of 2020, the warming influence of human-produced greenhouse gases had risen 47 percent above the 1990 baseline. The AGGI has continued to rise steadily since at least 1980. According to the EPA, 35% of CO₂ is created by the transportation sector, 31% by the electricity, 16% by industry and 11% by residential and commercial. For methane it is 30% natural gas and

petroleum, 27% enteric fermentation, 17% landfills. For nitrous oxide it is 75% agricultural soil management. For fluorinated gases it is 92% substitution of ozone depleting substances.

The urgency of the climate crisis we are facing should not be understated. It is an existential threat that needs to be addressed now. The measures outlined in this bill are ambitious and will not be easy but are necessary. If passed, this bill would help put us on track to reversing decades of emitting green house gases that have contributed significantly to the decline of our common environment. We encourage this committee and our General Assembly to step up to our generation's challenge of creating a cleaner Maryland that is healthier for everyone.

Respectfully,
Mathew Goldstein
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