Emily Cosgrove_HB0171_Climatexchange MD_Sunrise Movement Howard County_The Climate Reality Project

March 8th, 2022   **HEARING DATE:**   **3/10/2022**
BILL & TITLE: **HB0171 - Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act**
POSITION: **SUPPORT**
COMMITTEES: **Economic Matters & Environment and Transportation**
SPONSOR: **Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo**

Dear Chairman, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Emily Cosgrove, I am a junior at Mt. Hebron High School in Ellicott City, and I live in District 9A. Instead of writing testimonies, I would prefer to focus on my studies at school, run stress-free around the fields in my neighborhood, and be a regular teenage kid. Yet I found myself in a world in crisis and became an advocate for the present and future of humanity. Everyday I live with the fear of what the next year, the next month, the next day will bring as the climate crisis worsens. Ecosystems are collapsing, natural disasters are devastating the globe, and the Earth that was once a haven to us is becoming uninhabitable. My fellow humans are dying.

In 2016, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report finding that the destruction caused by the climate crisis will be immensely worse than present day if we exceed 1.5°C of warming above pre-industrial levels. Beyond 1.5 degrees, runaway global warming and catastrophic climate change will become unavoidable and increasingly irreversible. More recent reports from the IPCC, from both 2021 and earlier this year, state that we are on track to exceed 1.5°C of warming within the next two decades. If greenhouse gases continue to be emitted at the current rate, the world could reach anywhere between 3.3-5.7°C of warming by the end of the century. The last time the world warmed 5°C, 96% of all species went extinct.

The reports affirm that it is still possible to remain below 1.5°C of warming, or at least return to lower levels after exceeding it, but only if massive cuts to emissions are made within this decade. The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act, HB0171, would mandate a 60% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 and a 100% reduction by 2040. These reductions are the borderline percentages necessary to avoid the worst of the climate crisis. Anything less will fail. As a large and highly industrialized country, the United States has an urgent responsibility to end greenhouse gas emissions and transition to sustainable energy. Maryland can be a leader in this transition. The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act will put fees on fossil fuels. The revenue generated will go towards sustainable infrastructure, local and municipal governments to aid with climate resilience, and low and moderate income households to protect them from financial harm.

Most importantly, 50% of the revenue used for infrastructure will be directed specifically towards environmental justice projects. As a result of current and historic racism in housing and development, communities of color are on the frontlines of the climate crisis due to factors such as the placement of fossil fuel facilities near their neighborhoods, lack of preparatory and

recovery resources for severe weather events, and climate gentrification. Frontline communities must be prioritized in solutions to the climate crisis. The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act will not only achieve critical reductions in greenhouse gases; it will also pursue these reductions in a manner that is equitable.

I would like to conclude by reminding you that although I am only a high school student, I was moved to activism by the dormancy of those in power. The Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act is your chance to change the pattern of feeble climate legislation and make Maryland a leader in avoiding the worst consequences of the climate crisis. Every year that we continue to emit fossil fuels brings us closer to exceeding far beyond 1.5°C into a world where human survival is impossible. I prioritized action. I urge you, the legislators who have the power to enforce the action needed, to do the same.