



**HB695 - Environment- Climate Crisis Plan – Requirement
(Better Together to Save Our Weather Act of 2022)**

Testimony before

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 18, 2022

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB695**, to improve our county planning around climate change. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo in sponsoring this legislation.

The climate crisis can be survived if we keep our promises and translate our commitments into swift action that delivers on expectations. HB 695 exemplifies the bold leadership and political will required. We urge you to vote in favor.

Maryland has significant environmental problems. To name a few, along Maryland's 3,190 miles of coastline, sea level rise is costing billions of dollars in lost real estate. In low lying counties, salt water intrudes on agricultural lands destroying livelihoods. The Blackwater Wildlife Refuge has lost large swaths of forest to rising salt water. Ellicott City's historical business area was devastated by flood waters, not once but twice. In Baltimore, citizens' health is affected by asthma inducing particulate emission levels rated among the highest levels in United States.

Maryland is positioned to provide exceptional leadership. HB695 lays out the undisputed facts on global warming and the urgent necessity of implementing solutions. It calls for all governmental jurisdictions to work together with over-sight and accountability. Specific, scientifically based solutions are enumerated. Comprehensive policies and measures are proposed to increase use of renewable energy and eliminate use of fossil fuels. The bill requires conducting a baseline of current greenhouse gas emissions and basing reduction targets on findings. It includes identifying vulnerable communities and infrastructure to negate heat island effect, provide cooling and improve air quality. It requires new buildings to be free of fossil fuels and old ones to be retrofitted; clean, efficient, and reliable public transportation to be provided, and additional electric vehicle charging stations to be constructed. In short, it is a blue print to combating climate crisis, protecting the physical health, financial well-being and environmental integrity of the citizens of Maryland.

We respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB695.

Barb Matheson
Columbia, MD 20144

