



Committee: Education, Health and Environmental affairs
Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 528 – *Climate Solutions Now Act 2022*
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 24, 2022

Dear Chairman Barve and members of the committee,

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility is a statewide organization of over 940 physicians and other health professionals and supporters that addresses the existential public health threats to life on this planet: the climate crisis, nuclear weapons and the issues of pollution and toxic effects on health. We advocate for public policy that addresses these threats based on evidence and through the lens of racial justice and equity.

Today we face the multigenerational threat of climate change. We are at a critical decision point that will determine the course of our future forever. Climate change is already here, and we are the last generation that will be able to course correct towards a livable future for all. This requires urgent action from many sectors. The Climate Solutions Now Bill 2022 is a major step in addressing this urgent issue. .

This bill ensures Maryland will be part of the new green future by addressing multiple issues including:

- Ensuring Maryland is in line with the current climate science by requiring a 60% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2030 (based on 2006 levels) and to reaching net neutrality by 2045
- Investing resources in overburdened communities
- Updating our methane accounting practices
- Taking a number of steps to reduce emissions, such as electrifying state vehicles, and school buses, measures improve energy efficiency in schools and new buildings

Climate change is on our doorstep. Rising seas caused by Climate Change result in frequent flooding in Annapolis and all along Maryland's extensive coastline. NOAA notes that the Chesapeake Bay is the 3rd most vulnerable area of the United States to sea level rise.

Dorchester

County is presently the 4th largest county and it is expected to be the 14th largest by the year 2100 as ½ of the county becomes open water. Ellicott City had 2 episodes of "once in a 1000 year rains" in 2 years. Sirens now warn residents after heavy rains. Statistics confirm what Marylanders already know our summers are heating up and lasting longer. Extreme heat events have increased by more than 100% between the 1980's and the 2000's when compared to the 1960s-1970s, a rapid rise that is unprecedented. In addition to all the problems that occur because of this there are specific effects on the health of our citizens particularly our most vulnerable populations.

Patients now suffer more seasonal allergies from plants such as ragweed whose pollen seasons have lengthened with rising temperatures. Levels of pollutant are higher and put air quality in the unhealthy zone more often with heat. People with chronic lung conditions have more serious challenges on Code Red bad air days. In April 2016 the “Maryland Climate and Health Profile Report” from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Health Hygiene and University of Maryland School of Public Health noted that extreme heat was associated with more heat related hospitalizations especially in Baltimore, There were increased hospitalizations for Asthma overall but especially for non-Hispanic whites and children age 5-17. It is not just our breathing that is affected by heat and pollution but also heat exacerbates the effects of cardiovascular disease Extreme heat events increased the risk of heart attacks in those over the age of 65. The increase risk for heart attacks due to heat events was a 27% increase for non- Hispanic blacks and 9% for non-Hispanic whites

Severe heat also results in more food and waterborne infections such as Salmonella and Campylobacter which can cause food poisoning and lead to serious illness. Coastal communities in particular suffer higher incidences of Salmonella related outbreaks as a result of these extreme weather events. Public Health Research has demonstrated that small temperature changes can lead to the emergence of serious insect borne diseases not previously seen in Maryland as well as an increase incidence of known vector borne diseases, notably Lyme Disease.

The 4th National Climate Assessment from 2018 noted that “the health and wellbeing of Americans is already affected by climate change, with adverse health consequences projected to worsen with additional climate change .Climate change affects human health by altering exposures to heat waves, floods, droughts, and other extreme events: vector-, food-, and waterborne infectious diseases, changes in the quality and safety of air, food and water and stresses to mental health and wellbeing”

The 2019 US call to Action on Climate Health and Equity a Policy Action Agenda. Noted Climate change is a Health Care **Emergency**. This call to Action was signed onto by more than 70 major medical groups. Including the AMA , ACP, AAFP and the AAP.

Our own Maryland Commission on Climate Change, which is an intergovernmental panel on Climate Change and the International Panel on Climate Change both, noted that developed nations need to reduce emissions to net zero by 2045. This bill is a major step towards achieving that goal. We have an opportunity to listen to scientists now while signaling to the nation that Maryland is a leader in addressing climate issues. There is no more time to delay on meaningful climate action. Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility urges support for SB528 Climate Solutions Now Act 2022. The public health costs of inaction are too great.

Elise Riley MD FACP
Steering Committee
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Resources:

1. NOAA National Centers for environmental Information/ State Climate summaries, www.NCEI.NOAA.gov
2. Documentary Film “High Tide in Dorchester” <https://www.mpt.org/stationrelations/high-tide-in-dorchester>
3. Maryland Climate and Health Profile Report 2016 through mde.maryland.gov
4. 4th National Climate Assessment, Climate Impacts in the United States, <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov>
5. 2019 US Call to Action on Climate Health and Equity, signed onto to by more than 70 health care organizations, climatehealthaction.org
6. Maryland Commission on Climate Change, through mde.maryland.gov