

Hello, my name is Ramanpreet Johal. I am a member of Progressive MD. Today we are focused on advocating for mental health and fair opportunities for students in Maryland so that they can focus on academic success without the added stress of environmental, political, and racial issues. Today I want to focus on the environmental issues of our nation. Having a good environment in an academic building is one of the most important factors for focus and quality of work. Students tend to drift their focus from work onto the impacts caused by bad air quality. I remember learning about climate change for the first time in elementary school. Now there have been many events that pushed me into activism. One of the many being the day I watched the Youtube video of crashing waves and small pure white ice caps floating on them. The scene was magnificent. As a child obsessed with the details of Disney and fairyland, I watched in awe as the camera drone showcased the large bodies of water and how small the animals were compared to the vast sea. All joy vanished as I sat up straight and furrowed my eyebrows. The peaceful crashes soon became violent. The ice caps began to drift further and further away as they fell into the water. The day I learned of climate change and its power to take away my childhood dream of living in a world that many described as on film only. Coming home I passed a factory. Unsure of what they were producing I remember seeing the black smoke coming out of a small thin pipe, so similar to the ones in my basement that provided the water I was still in awe of. The ability of a small pipe to bring so much darkness into the world. The courage of the workers and creators to take away my privilege of having my window open because my mother didn't want me to cough as I inhaled toxins. As I sat in class the next day I looked out of the window. Despite the vast greenery in the park behind my school, I thought of the factory one block away slowly engulfing my freedom the way it did yesterday. The issue was big. I understood that. As a child and even now I find myself thinking of issues as things that are too far and won't really affect my community. One week. 7 days later I walked into my elementary school once again. The smell of cleaner of the fresh floors flooding into my nose as I walked up the wet stairs slowly out of fear that I would fall in front of the jury. My critical classmates that I will never forget. I recall hearing my teacher rushing as I reached the top to help a girl in my class reach for the pump as she began an asthma attack. Confused, I stood away from them as told and waited. The girl's silky hair fell over her face and her cheeks turned the darkest shade of red I saw on her till now. When I asked why she had an attack the teacher responded it could be a result of the air she inhaled with her McMuffin. Trash incinerators brought my fear of destruction closer. They brought that girls' battle back. Students deserve an environment where they wish to go to school without worrying about protecting themselves from toxic smells or developing illnesses such as asthma or high blood pressure. School has been found difficult enough. I recall my parents' stories about the struggles to study and do better. This was WITHOUT the worry of if they can breath the entire time they are out without sickness. With this bill, I hope that young me can be calm knowing she will be able to go to school and learn today. With this bill, I hope that girl can come to school without worrying about if she needs to wait to eat. Students deserve a fair chance or at the very least the ability to fight for one in the future. Thank you.