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Economic Matters Committee
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Chairman, House Economic Matters Committee
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Delegate Marc Korman
Chairman, Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building - Room 251
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Mr. Chairman,

I am writing in support of HB 1438 - Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act of 2024.

Fossil fuels pose a serious and immediate threat to the health of Maryland's communities, environment, and economy. Research corroborates that carbon emissions lead to increased temperatures, more severe and frequent storms, droughts, rising sea levels, and a plethora of other health and environmental concerns.¹ HB 1438 Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act will make the entities responsible for greenhouse gas pollution and fossil fuel production financially liable for the resulting harms. The RENEW Act establishes the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Payment Program in the Department of the Environment to secure payments from certain business that extract fossil fuels or refine petroleum products in order to provide a source of revenue for State efforts to adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change and to address the health impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations. At least 40% of the funds will be directed towards adaptive or mitigating infrastructure projects that directly benefit communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. Other avenues include supporting flood management programs across Maryland, addressing health disparities as a result of climate change, and investing in clean energy infrastructure with a focus on low-income and moderate-income households.

Rising temperatures have a substantial effect on healthcare. Based on Maryland hospitalization data from 2000-2012, exposure to extreme heat increased the risk of hospitalization for heart

¹ United Nations, *Causes and Effects of Climate Change* (n.d.), <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change#:~:text=Fossil%20fuels%20%E2%80%93%20coal%2C%20oil%20and,they%20trap%20the%20sun's%20heat.>

attack and asthma to 11% and 22% respectively.² By 2040, hospitalization rates for heart attack and asthma during the summer months are expected to grow by a whopping 68.4% and 136.8%. Extensive research shows that climate change will result in a higher prevalence of food-borne, vector-borne, and water-related illness over the coming decades.

Extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common and across Maryland, more is being spent on responding to such events. Due to heavier rain storms, Saint Mary's County is spending \$950,000 a year to upgrade storm weather management systems.³ In response to chronic flooding, Annapolis is spending \$54 million to update its dock.⁴ In Prince George's County, the Stormwater Management Enterprise Fund is estimated to need \$60 million annually in financial support, absent other revenue sources.⁵ In Howard County, \$228 million is being spent on flood prevention in Ellicott City.⁶ By 2040, Maryland is projected to need \$27 billion to pay for seawalls in response to rising sea levels.⁷ The consequences of climate change are costly, and 100% of the burden of paying for them is currently on taxpayers.⁸

Fossil fuel combustion is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change,⁹ but just 100 companies are responsible for 71% of global emissions since 1988.¹⁰ One of these companies, ExxonMobil, was aware of the climate crisis as early as 1977, a decade before it became a public issue, but continued to sow doubt and misinformation about climate change science. Much like the tobacco industry that spread lies about the health risks of smoking, ExxonMobil undermined climate change concerns by hiring the same consultants to develop public communication strategies on how to discredit climate change. In the 1970s and 80s, ExxonMobil conducted unprecedented research by empirically sampling carbon dioxide and building rigorous climate models which resulted in conclusive evidence that carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels would lead to climate warming. However, in 1988 at a congressional hearing, when NASA scientist James Hansen explained the transpiring issue of global warming, Exxon publicly stated that the science was still controversial.¹¹

² Amir Sapkota et al., Maryland Climate and Health Report, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Apr. 2016),

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Marylander/Documents/MCCC/Publications/Reports/MarylandClimateandHealthProfileReport.pdf>

³ CCAN Action Fund, *RENEW Act Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather* (n.d.),

<https://ccanactionfund.org/renewact/>

⁴ Id., at 1

⁵ Lateshia Beachum, *Prince George's leaders weigh spending cuts as shortfall looms*. The Washington Post (January 16, 2024)

⁶ Id., at 1

⁷ Center for Climate Integrity, *High Tide Tax: The Price to Protect Coastal Communities from Rising Seas* (June, 2019), https://www.climatecosts2040.org/files/ClimateCosts2040_Report.pdf

⁸ Data for Progress, *Maryland Climate Superfund* (February 28, 2023)

⁹ Id., at 1

¹⁰ Tess Riley, *Just 100 companies responsible for 71% of global emissions, study says*. The Guardian (July 10, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/jul/10/100-fossil-fuel-companies-investors-responsible-71-global-emissions-cdp-study-climate-change>

¹¹ Shannon Hall, *Exxon Knew about Climate Change almost 40 years ago*. Scientific American, Climate Change (Oct. 26, 2015), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/exxon-knew-about-climate-change-almost-40-years-ago/>

HB 1438 Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act will make the entities responsible for greenhouse gas pollution and fossil fuel production financially liable for the resulting harms. The RENEW Act establishes the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Payment Program in the Department of the Environment to secure payments from certain business that extract fossil fuels or refine petroleum products in order to provide a source of revenue for State efforts to adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change and to address the health impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations. At least 40% of the funds will be directed towards adaptive or mitigating infrastructure projects that directly benefit communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. Other avenues include supporting flood management programs across Maryland, addressing health disparities as a result of climate change, and investing in clean energy infrastructure with a focus on low-income and moderate-income households.

Maryland voters are on the same page; 73% of Maryland voters express support for a bill assessing a one-time fee paid by big oil and gas companies to help bolster climate-resilient infrastructure.¹² After hearing arguments on both sides of the issue, that number rose to 80%¹³ This is a policy that Marylanders clearly support.

This bill is built on a simple premise: if you make a mess, you clean it up. Fossil fuel companies have made record profits while increasing the threat of climate change disasters and risking the health of our neighbors. The onus should not be on taxpayers to clean up their mess.

Thank you for your consideration, I urge a favorable report on HB 1438.

¹² Id., at 8

¹³ Id., at 8