



Committee: Energy, Education, and Environment Committee
Testimony on: [\(HB1438/SB0958\)](#) - The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather ([RENEW](#)) Act
Organization: Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund
Submitting: Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, co-founder
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 20, 2024

Honorable Chairman and Esteemed Committee –

Thank you for letting me speak with you today in support of **the Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather or RENEW Act (HB1438/SB0958)** which will hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the harm they have done to the good people of our state.

My name is Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi and I serve as a Maryland Climate Commissioner. Soon I will turn 60 years old. And yet, when I was just one year old, President Johnson's Science Advisory Committee, headed by scientist Roger Revelle, submitted a [report](#) highlighting the possibility that human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, contributed to climate change.

Fossil fuel companies then did their own research and knew that their own products would undermine our health and safety as well as the world we all live in. Then they deliberately spent huge sums of money to mislead the public – putting profits over people and our shared planet.

For example:

- ExxonMobil conducted internal research on climate change as early as the 1970s. Multiple [reports](#), including in the [Wall Street Journal](#), showed that, despite their knowledge of the harm they were doing, the company funded campaigns and organizations that spread doubt about climate science and downplayed the risks of global warming.
- Shell's own [internal documents](#) from the 1980s indicated that Shell was aware of the potential dangers of climate change and rising carbon dioxide levels. However, the company downplayed the risks publicly and even lobbied against strong climate action.
- The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) has published numerous [reports](#) showing that the American Petroleum Institute, a trade association representing the oil and gas industry, has known about the science of climate change for decades and yet engaged in campaigns to cast doubt on climate science and influence public opinion.

They knew! Like big tobacco and the Sackler family with their opioids, they all knew and yet went on to deceive the public at great costs to lives and livelihoods.

You can read all about the climate lies in the book [Merchant of Doubt](#) by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway or in [The New Climate War](#) by Dr. Michael E. Mann.

It's worth noting that climate deniers said that scientist Dr. Mann was lying – but they just lost \$1 million in a [libel suit](#).

We now know that some of the biggest and more profitable companies – the fossil fuel companies and big polluters -- knowingly pushed products that help cause extreme weather and climate change here in Maryland.

And now we are all paying the price. People have drowned in Ellicott City and Rockville. We have 100,000+ acres of land at risk. Our food supply and health has been harmed. They are playing us for suckers.

The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather or RENEW Act (HB1438/SB0958) will hold the polluters and liars accountable for their actions. It will invest in disaster relief and preparedness for Maryland.

Our state has an [outstanding climate plan](#). However, it will cost \$1 billion a year to implement it. That should not be done on our backs.

Big tobacco was held accountable for their lies and the deaths they caused.

So too was the Sackler family for their wrongful practices that led to opioid deaths.

Today Maryland has the opportunity to do the right thing – and get the polluters to pay – and not Maryland taxpayers – for the damage that they caused.

It's like the old saying: “If you break it, you've bought it.”

The fossil fuel industry broke it. Now we need your help to get them to pay.

I urge you to review the [poll data](#) that shows that people in Maryland support this work. I also urge you to read the analysis from the Attorney General's office which shows that this effort has legal standing.

I urge you to strongly support the RENEW Act today.

Thank you for your consideration.

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