



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal
Public Policy
Network

Testimony in Support of SB 681

Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024

****FAVORABLE****

TO: Sen. Pamela Beidle, Chair; Sen. Katherine Klausmeier, Vice Chair; and the members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Rev. Ken Phelps, Jr., Director, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 27, 2024

The season of Lent calls the Church at this time to confess “our self-indulgent appetites and ways,” “our waste and pollution of God’s creation,” and “our lack of concern for those who come after us” (Ash Wednesday Liturgy, Book of Common Prayer, p. 268). Lent is also the season of the prophets.

Prophecy is a critical response to the excesses of society. It is marked by its fierce commitment to humanity and speaks to the perception of potentialities and possibilities - both for good and evil - within the social structure. Prophets hold up the mirror of existence and force us to take a look, a hard, honest look at whom we really are and the conditions that we have created

The mirror never lies. The prophets were God’s inconvenient messengers. And when the activity of the people, or lack thereof - had moved the society to a tipping point, the prophets came with a warning about the wrath to come. Not the wrath of God, but the inescapable and often catastrophic consequences that were the product of their own doing. The warnings were dire, but they still carried with them the fleeting hope that if behaviors changed, disaster might be avoided.

Our collective histories reflect how often we have taken prophets’ messages to heart. Our mother is dying. Her prophets - speaking for decades now - have made that quite clear.



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We have an opportunity here. This is the appointed time for all God's children to work together for the common goal of renewing the earth as a hospitable abode for the flourishing of all life, not just human.

Transportation is Maryland's #1 source of climate pollution and must be addressed to meet the state's goal of reducing emissions 60% by 2031. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024 will ensure that future transportation projects align with Maryland's goals of reducing climate pollution by expanding transportation options.

SB 681 would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle travel (measured as VMT: "Vehicle Miles Traveled") caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation options may include improving and expanding public transportation, creating bike and pedestrian infrastructure, expanding broadband access, or other smart growth strategies. This legislation supports the Maryland Climate Pollution Reduction Plan's finding that a 20% per-capita reduction in VMT by 2050 is necessary for meeting the state's climate goals.

Our mother is dying. There may still be time to save her, but we must act swiftly and definitively to accomplish that goal.

We urge a favorable report.

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