



**Committee: Joint Meeting of Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation Committees**

**Testimony on: HB128 - The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act**

**Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing**

**Submitting: Monica O'Connor, Co-Chair**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: January 23, 2025**

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, Members of the Economic Matters Committee, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB128 The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB128.

The climate crisis is making extreme weather events more common and more costly. From 2010 to 2020, Maryland experienced 31 extreme weather events, costing the state up to \$10 billion in damages.<sup>1</sup> Two 1,000-year floods in Ellicott City in less than 2 years, recurring floods in Annapolis, salt water intrusion on farmland on the Eastern Shore, and punishing heat waves in Baltimore are some examples of how the climate crisis is damaging lives and infrastructure. Maryland State and county governments have no choice but to make expensive investments to adapt to more frequent extreme weather events. These escalating costs are driving up costs for Marylanders and contributing to the state budget crisis.

The Renew Act directs the state to conduct an analysis of how much climate impacts are costing Maryland, then directs the state to require large out-of-state fossil fuel companies to pay that amount to Maryland. Right now, necessary adaptation measures are costing over \$50 million to upgrade the dock in Annapolis due to chronic flooding, \$228 million to combat flooding in Ellicott City, and \$950,000 annually to upgrade stormwater management systems to handle heavier rain storms in St. Mary's County. Similar costs afflict nearly every jurisdiction across the state. A study is needed to determine just how much a financial burden for adaptation and mitigation investments is being borne by Maryland tax payers as a direct result of climate change.

Renew will take that burden off the backs of Maryland taxpayers and put it squarely on the

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AJP-State-Fact-Sheet-MD.pdf>

shoulders of the largest international fossil fuels companies who knew and lied about the climate crisis for nearly half a century.<sup>2</sup> Renew will bring new revenue without making a single Marylander pay an additional cent, by charging large, out-of-state fossil fuel companies a one-time penalty for their historical emissions. It will require any company that has emitted more than a billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions cumulatively between 1994 and 2023 and sells its products in Maryland to collectively pay billions of dollars to help balance the budget and invest in climate solutions. This would apply to roughly 40 of the wealthiest companies. In 2022, those companies collectively made over \$500 billion in profits.

New York State and Vermont have already passed similar legislation and California, Minnesota, New Jersey, Virginia, and Massachusetts are considering similar legislation. The federal legislation was also [reintroduced](#) by Senator Van Hollen in the current Congress. A 2023 poll conducted by Gonzales Research & Media Services shows most Marylanders believe that the energy companies responsible for the climate crisis should pay for infrastructure upgrades and adaptation, not the taxpayer.<sup>3</sup>

To survive climate change, Maryland needs new revenue. The RENEW Act is the first step in relieving the onerous and growing financial burdens forced on the people of this state. The MLC Climate Justice Wings agrees that Maryland should collect funds from out of state energy companies and invest those funds in building a better Maryland.

Therefore, we recommend a FAVORABLE report for HB128.

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Adat Shalom Climate Action

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Earth Holders

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Parents of Prince George's

Climate Reality Project

ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition

Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County

Echotopia

Elders Climate Action

Fix Maryland Rail

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/01/harvard-led-analysis-finds-exxonmobil-internal-research-accurately-predicted-climate-change/>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.marylandmatters.org/2024/02/02/poll-shows-wide-support-in-md-for-making-polluters-pay-for-climate-change/>

HoCoClimateAction  
IndivisibleHoCoMD  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Mobilize Frederick  
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Mountain Maryland Movement  
Nuclear Information & Resource Service  
Progressive Maryland  
Safe & Healthy Playing Fields  
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee  
The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
WISE