



South County Environmental Justice Coalition  
PRINCE GEORGES COUNTY MARYLAND

January 21, 2025

## HB0128/SB0149 | The Responding to Emergency Needs and Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act

### Position | Favorable

#### CHARTER MEMBERS

**Patricia Monroe, SCEJC Chair** and  
President, South Lawn Citizens Association

**Staci Hartwell, Legislative and Strategic  
Advisor** and Chair (Emerita), NAACP MD  
State Conference Environmental and  
Climate Justice Committee

**Herbert Jones, Community Affairs** and  
President, Tantallon North Area Civic  
Association

**Sharon Lawrence, Operations** and  
Board Secretary, Livingston Woods  
Homeowner's Association

**Dee Smith**  
Strategic Advisor

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

Black and Brown communities have long borne the heaviest toll of fossil fuel extraction and combustion, enduring disproportionate harm for generations.[1] Today, as climate change accelerates, these same communities are at the epicenter of its most devastating impacts, paying the ultimate price—with lives lost, homes destroyed, and financial devastation deepened by the loss of generational wealth and opportunity.

The costs of the climate crisis are unavoidable and accelerating. In FY 2023, Prince George's County allocated \$150 million to combat flooding and bolster resilience.[2] St. Mary's County spends \$950,000 annually to upgrade stormwater systems in response to heavier rainfall, while Annapolis has committed \$54 million to protect its downtown from chronic flooding. By 2040, Maryland is projected to require billions for seawalls and coastal defenses.

Maryland faces a daily and increasingly deadly onslaught of climate impacts, including saltwater intrusion on the Eastern Shore, widespread flooding, extreme heat in urban areas, reduced crop yields in farming communities, sea-level rise across 3,000 miles of coastline, and increasingly severe weather events such as tornadoes and extreme winter storms. In Charles County, septic backups and groundwater pollution compound these challenges. These escalating issues demand urgent action to protect Maryland's communities and future.

To this end, the RENEW Act introduces a retrospective charge, holding historical polluters accountable by placing the financial burden on entities with significant past contributions to climate change. By targeting major emitters, this legislation ensures a fairer distribution of costs for climate mitigation, restoration, and adaptation. While the fee won't address all restoration needs, it is an essential first step — a "foot in the door" — toward just and equitable climate solutions.[3]

RENEW seeks to address historical injustices by prioritizing support for vulnerable populations, including low-income households and marginalized racial groups, who have often been excluded from the benefits of industrial development while disproportionately bearing its harms. Unlike carbon taxes or other carbon-pricing schemes, which often have regressive effects and disproportionately burden low-income households, RENEW requires a one-time payment from historical polluters.[4] This approach avoids exacerbating economic disparities and redirects resources to address systemic inequities.

Leveraging tools like the Maryland Department of the Environment Environmental Justice Screen, RENEW identifies and prioritizes communities most impacted by

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[1] <https://naacp.org/resources/fossil-fueled-foolery-20>

[2] <https://www.wusa9.com/article/tech/science/environment/prince-georges-county-budgets-for-climate-change-costs/65-4a406e9d-0f83-4482-84a8-d2534120933a>

[3] [https://www.wbaltv.com/article/maryland-climate-pollution-reduction-plan-2023-spending/46242683?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.wbaltv.com/article/maryland-climate-pollution-reduction-plan-2023-spending/46242683?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

[4] <https://naacp.org/resources/opposition-carbon-markets-pricing-schemes>.

environmental degradation. These areas, often facing heightened vulnerability to climate effects such as flooding, extreme heat, and industrial pollution, stand to benefit from targeted investments. Revenue generated by the RENEW Act could fund pollution cleanup, infrastructure resilience, and green job creation initiatives. These measures address immediate harms and promote long-term social and environmental equity, paving the way for improved health, economic opportunity, and climate resilience in historically underserved communities.

The RENEW Act is a forward-looking policy that combines accountability for historical emissions with restorative justice. It provides an equitable pathway to a sustainable future. The South County Environmental Justice Coalition supports the RENEW Act for these reasons.

Sincerely,



Staci Hartwell,  
Legislative and Strategic Advisor  
South County Environmental Justice Coalition