



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of HB 128 - The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act

TO: Chair Watson and members of the Economic Matters Committee and  
Chair Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee  
FROM: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate, Climate Change  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.  
DATE: January 23, 2025

Heavier rains, higher tides, and record heat are damaging lives and infrastructure across Maryland today. **HB 128 - The Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act** will make the necessary investments to prepare for—and recover from—worsening extreme weather events. This is why the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports this legislation.

Right now, taxpayers across Maryland are paying the costs of climate change—which are adding up and contributing to the state’s projected budget shortfall—while large, out-of-state fossil fuel companies are reaping all the benefits. The RENEW Act will bring new revenue into the state—without making a single Marylander pay an additional cent—by charging these companies a one time penalty for their historical emissions.

We can’t afford NOT to support this bill.

The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on Unitarian Universalist Values, including Interdependence (honoring the interdependent web of all existence) and Justice (where all feel welcome and can thrive). Working to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience for climate change is central to our beliefs.

We know that Global Climate Change impacts marginalized communities first and worst, AND investments in those communities for climate resilience and adaptation are last. The bill will ensure that forty percent of all the investments are required to go to overburdened, underserved communities, as defined by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

In order to protect the people and places that Marylanders hold dear, the state must make necessary infrastructure investments to adapt to these new extremes. These investments will make Maryland a cleaner, more resilient, and more affordable place to live. They will create jobs and help prevent disasters from ruining homes and workspaces.

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The bill directs the state to conduct an analysis of how much anthropogenic climate impacts are costing Maryland, then directs the state to require large out-of-state fossil fuel companies to pay that amount to Maryland. The one time payment will only apply to companies that have emitted more than 1 billion tons of carbon cumulatively between 1994 and 2023. That is a short list of companies, none of which are based in Maryland.

The RENEW Act will provide the funds to make these necessary investments. It would raise \$900 million a year for 10 years and provide the dollars the state needs to build new drainage systems, upgrade HVACs in public buildings, recover when disaster strikes, and much more.

To survive climate change, Maryland needs new revenue. Governor Moore has stated that Maryland needs \$1B per year for mitigation, resilience, and adaptation. The RENEW Act can provide these necessary funds without making Marylanders bear the financial burden. Failure to adopt the Renew Act is effectively a steadily increasing tax on Marylanders to pay for the impacts of Climate Change. Maryland should waste no time in passing the RENEW Act and collecting funds from out of state energy companies and investing those funds in building a better Maryland.

*Phil Webster, PhD*

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