

HB128 - SUPPORT

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HB 128 - Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act of 2025

Joint Meeting of Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation Committee
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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,

I am writing to strongly urge a favorable report on HB-128. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland for forty years. As someone who is deeply concerned about the existential threat posed by climate change, I regularly volunteer with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) and strongly consider candidates' records on climate change when deciding how to vote.

Governor Moore has made us all acutely aware of the budget crisis currently facing our state. HB 128 gets at the heart of our present and future budget difficulties by helping the state (and by extension, Maryland taxpayers) pay for costly climate change adaptation and mitigation.

As you are probably aware, 2023 was the hottest year ever recorded in human history... until 2024, which was even hotter. With the increased warming comes cascading extreme weather events from drought and wildfires (Maryland suffered an usual number of wildfires at the end of last year due to drought) to more dangerous storms and flooding to extreme heat in the summer.

These events have already been tremendously costly for Maryland taxpayers. Costs will surely mushroom as the crisis deepens. (One can only hope we would never be saddled with anything like the estimated \$350 billion in costs from this month's wildfires in L.A. County, California.) Jurisdictions across our state are already being forced to pay vast sums for things like enhanced flood protection, while schools face rising costs for air conditioning. These costs are real and are threatening not only taxpayers' pocketbooks, but our state's ability to meet commitments to important priorities like education, health, infrastructure, and renewable energy production.

The RENEW Act would require those most responsible for the climate crisis – major fossil fuel companies – to pay for the costs their products have imposed on society ***without passing those costs on to consumers.***

The bill requires the state first to conduct a study that would quantify the impact of man-made climate change on Maryland. Fossil fuel companies that have emitted more than 1 billion tons of carbon between 1984 and 2023 would then be required to pay that amount to the state. As you are probably aware, none of those companies are based in Maryland.

Other states are taking similar action. Vermont and New York have passed similar legislation already. Several other states, including Virginia, are considering such measures. In addition, Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen has reintroduced a similar bill in the Senate.

HB 128 is effectively a taxpayer relief bill. The costs Marylanders have already paid in dealing with extreme weather are likely only the tip of the iceberg. States all over the country are facing astronomical costs from wildfires and storms. Maryland should not allow its budget priorities to be swamped by the costs of extreme weather brought on by companies from outside of our state.

I strongly urge you to submit a favorable report on the RENEW Act to help protect Maryland from the rising costs associated with climate change.