



Committee: Energy, Education, and the Environment

Testimony on: Senate Bill 149 – Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act

Organization: Mobilize Frederick

Submitting: Karen Cannon, Executive Director

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 13, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 149, the Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act. Mobilize Frederick urges the Committee to issue a **favorable** report on this important bill.

Mobilize Frederick is a nonprofit advocacy organization of Frederick City and County residents formed in 2022 to assist with implementing the recommendations of the Climate Response and Resilience Report, a comprehensive climate action plan published in 2021 that will put Frederick City and County on the path to safer, healthier, and more resilient communities through innovative and effective local solutions.

Like many other communities across Maryland, the City of Frederick and Frederick County are experiencing first-hand the impacts of climate change – higher temperatures, periods of extreme heat, extended drought, and high intensity storms that have caused repeated flooding and severe wind damage. For example, two extreme weather events in 2015 and 2018 caused severe flooding, stormwater and sewer system backups, and millions of dollars of damage in the City of Frederick. Flood levels in one residential area rose as high as 2.7 feet and made primary roads inaccessible to emergency responders. Costly upgrades to the City’s stormwater management system are needed to reduce the risk of flood damage from future extreme weather events.

According to the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), which tracks and compiles storm and other extreme weather event data from across the nation, during the period between 1996 and 2021 Frederick County experienced:

- 237 flooding events that resulted in property damage totaling more than \$83 million;

- 12 droughts that caused more than \$40 million in crop damages;
- 57 extreme wind events that resulted in more than \$2 million dollars in property and crop damage; and
- 44 extreme heat events¹.

These loss estimates are believed to underrepresent actual losses because many losses go unreported, or like crop damages, are difficult to quantify. Going forward, extreme weather events will only increase in frequency and intensity, leading to mounting annual losses to City and County residents and businesses in the millions of dollars.

The RENEW Act is a vitally important revenue-raising bill that, through a one-time fee on international out-of-state fossil-fuel companies with the largest historical greenhouse gas emissions of more than 1 billion tons between 1994 and 2023, would raise billions of dollars for deposit in a newly created Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Fund to support State and local government climate programs. Each of the roughly 40 fossil fuel companies that would be subject to the penalty would pay a percentage of the total historical climate damages, as determined by the State Treasurer, that is proportional to that company's emissions over the covered period.

In this fiscally constrained time when the State is faced with the largest continuing structural deficit in its history, this legislation will shift a share of the cost of climate mitigation, adaptation, and recovery programs and projects to companies responsible for causing the pollution and resulting damages – costs that would otherwise be shouldered by taxpayers.

A growing number of states are turning to “climate superfund” legislation like the RENEW Act to fund climate programs. Both New York State and Vermont have enacted climate superfund legislation. Similar legislation is under consideration in Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, and California.

The funds raised by this bill would go to a wide range of State and local government infrastructure and other climate change programs, including:

- Flood management projects;
- Water, sewer, and wastewater treatment plant upgrades;
- Upgrades to roads, bridges, rail infrastructure, and transit systems; and
- Planning to prepare for extreme flooding.

¹ [Frederick County Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan](#), March 2022.

Low-income communities and communities of color located near highway corridors, trucking hubs, and industrial facilities have been disproportionately harmed by emissions from fossil fuels that degrade air quality. These frontline communities are also experiencing the worst impacts of climate change. To address these historical and ongoing harms, the RENEW Act requires 40 percent of all investments made by the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Fund to benefit overburdened, underserved communities.

Marylanders overwhelmingly support the public policies embodied in the RENEW Act. In a December 2023 statewide poll of registered voters conducted by Gonzales Research & Media Services for the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, 68 percent of those surveyed expressed support for the policies contained in the RENEW Act. The full results of the poll are available [here](#).

The RENEW Act will relieve a significant burden on taxpayers by providing a much needed alternative source of funding that is critical to recovering from extreme weather events and building Maryland's resiliency to the impacts of climate change. For all the foregoing reasons, we urge the Committee to issue a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 149.

Karen Cannon
Executive Director

cc: Kathy Kinsey
Chair, Government Affairs and Policy Committee