



SB149 - SUPPORT

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Rachel Carson Council's Support for SB149: Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act of 2025

Joint Meeting of Education, Energy, and the Environment and Finance Committee

February 13th, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment and Finance Committees,

On behalf of The Rachel Carson Council, a national environmental justice nonprofit organization with a robust Maryland campus network, we urge a favorable report on SB149 as a taxpayer relief bill that prioritizes Maryland's future.

Rachel Carson once said, "The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction." In her legacy—and in response to the voices of young people across the state of Maryland—we must pass policies like the RENEW Act as taxpayer-friendly safeguards to protect Marylanders from the worst and most costly climate impacts: flooding, intense storms, extreme heat, saltwater intrusion, and related public health concerns.

Simply put, it is unfair for Maryland taxpayers to shoulder the costs of extreme weather events and watch those disasters worsen our state budget deficit. Passing the RENEW Act will relieve Maryland taxpayers of the financial burden of adapting to climate change and help the state address our budget shortfall **without making any Marylanders pay an additional cent in energy costs or taxes.** Similar legislation has passed in Vermont and New York, with bills also under consideration in Virginia, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and California. All of these states have seen unique and unprecedented climate disasters, many yielding billions of dollars in damage.

Whether we like it or not, Maryland will continue to see expensive, impossible-to-ignore disasters made worse by climate change. The question is whether we will let those disasters worsen the budget crisis as taxpayers pay up, or instead let the polluters responsible invest in Maryland's health, infrastructure, fuel switching, schools, and disaster preparedness.

Howard County is spending over \$228 million to combat flooding in Ellicott City, Baltimore City is paying to install air conditioning in public schools like City College because of hotter weather, Annapolis is spending over \$50 million to upgrade their dock due to chronic flooding, and similar costs afflict nearly every jurisdiction across the state. **These costs are all currently borne by Maryland tax payers.**

The RENEW Act moves the costs from taxpayers to out-of-state fossil fuel companies to fund climate adaptation. Those companies will not be able to pass those costs onto consumers.

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.

Please pass the RENEW Act as a revenue-raiser that will alleviate taxpayer burdens and protect Marylanders from worsening, inevitable impacts of climate change in our state.

The Rachel Carson Council urges a favorable report on SB149.