



Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment
Finance

Testimony: SB 149 - Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather
(RENEW) Act of 2025

Organization: The Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD

Submitting: Betsy Singer

Position: FAVORABLE

Hearing Date: February 13, 2025

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Our Jewish values compel us to act to repair the world (*tikkun olam*), which is a guiding principle of our Jewish faith. We act to prevent massive changes to Earth's climate as we face rising temperatures due to burning fossil fuels that trap greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere. Floods, fires, and drought threaten the lives and livelihoods of Marylanders and people all over the U.S. and other nations of the world.

Today, extreme weather events are driving up costs for Marylanders and contributing to the state budget crisis. In Howard County, we are spending over \$228 million to combat flooding in Ellicott City. Nearly every jurisdiction across the state is affected by climate-related costs, all of which are currently borne by Maryland taxpayers.

The RENEW Act will attempt to alleviate this unfair burden by establishing the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Fund. The largest international fossil fuel companies emit billions of tons of greenhouse gases that fuel climate disasters. Any company that has emitted more than a billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions between 1994 and 2023 and has sufficient connection with Maryland would pay a one-time fee into the Fund to help cover the costs of expensive upgrades to save the lives and infrastructure of vulnerable Marylanders. In 2023, the three largest oil and gas companies in the US reported combined profits of \$85.6 billion.

RENEW directs the state to conduct an analysis of how much climate impacts are costing Maryland, then directs the state to require these fossil fuel companies to pay that amount into the fund. RENEW relieves taxpayers of the financial burden of climate change by requiring out-of-state fossil fuel companies to pay for the costs, rather than the vulnerable people who currently pay the long-term price. We urge a favorable report on SB 149.