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**Testimony of Bryan Dunning
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**Before the Maryland Senate's Education, Energy and the Environment and Finance
Committees
Regarding Senate Bill SB0149: Responding to Emergency Needs From Extreme Weather
(RENEW) Act of 2025**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment, and Finance Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Center for Progressive Reform (the Center) in support of SB0149 (SB 149). The Center is a nonprofit research and advocacy organization that is focused on addressing our most pressing societal challenges, including advancing the concerns of historically marginalized communities by centering racial and economic justice in climate policy. For the reasons discussed in the testimony below, the Center requests that this committee issue a **favorable** report on SB 149.

Maryland now faces the impacts of anthropogenic climate change, which includes increasing instances of extreme storms, days of extreme heat and cold, and sea level rise which contribute to increased frequency of flooding, increasing urban-heat island effect, increased saltwater intrusion, and myriad public health impacts. This represents billions of dollars of investment the state must make to adapt its communities to be resilient enough to meet the threat, as well as increased costs borne by Marylanders in the form of medical bills, reduced work capacity, and adaptation efforts within their private residences. Importantly, in Maryland, as in other states, the communities most impacted by and/or susceptible to these climate-driven harms are often those least able to respond to them, including low-income communities, historically disadvantaged communities, and elderly populations on fixed income. It is critical that the Maryland Legislature take steps to ensure that these populations are protected.

Currently, the costs of climate adaptation in the state are to be borne by Maryland taxpayers, and the cost of responding to the climate crisis represents a significant burden on the state's finances at a time when the state faces a significant deficit. Absent legislation such as RENEW, the fossil fuel organizations who have driven the climate crisis, and who continue to reap record profits

year over year, will pass the costs of externalizing the combustion byproducts of fossil fuels onto the public.

The RENEW Act is narrowly targeted in its scope, aiming to recoup the costs of adaptation from approximately the 40 largest fossil fuel companies who have driven the climate crisis – holding them, in part, accountable for the costs they have externalized to the commons. Funds so collected through RENEW are earmarked for the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Fund, which creates a dedicated funding source to ensure the state has the finances to, amongst numerous other crucial programs, address disaster mitigation and response, respond to salt-water intrusion along the Chesapeake Bay, address urban heat island effect either through promoting efficient cooling systems or through resilience hubs to ensure low to moderate income households have a place to shelter, as well as enact a number of other equity-driven programs to protect those most vulnerable to climate change.

RENEW also, specifically, does not preclude legal action against the polluting companies to hold them accountable for a variety of actions under civil law, or preempt, supersede, or displace state or local laws addressing the climate crisis. In short, the act provides a pathway, here and now, for Maryland to begin to hold these organizations accountable and ensure finances to address the climate crisis but does not preclude alternate means to seek redress from the climatic harms caused by these companies.

For these reasons, the Center respectfully requests a favorable report from these committees.

Sincerely,

Bryan Dunning
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