

SB149 - SUPPORT

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SB149 - Responding to Emergency Needs from Extreme Weather (RENEW) Act of 2025

Meeting of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 13, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Michael Goldman, and I am a volunteer with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund. I am also a resident of University Park and live in Senate District 22. I am testifying in support of the RENEW Act–SB149.

One of the things that first drew my family to this part of Maryland was the historical charm of the University Park neighborhood. Our house was built in 1937, and we love its many original touches and the way it is nestled into the gently sloping hillside. However, some of the very features that we loved about the house have also taught us an object lesson about how the infrastructure of the past is failing to meet the demands of a changing climate. The original copper gutters were badly undersized, and during storms, that gently sloping hillside would funnel a small river of water toward our below-grade driveway with no drainage grate at the bottom. The first few storms that flooded our basement taught us these lessons quickly.

One memory specifically sticks in my mind. A storm dropped more than an inch of rain in less than an hour and, determined to save our basement from flooding again, I was out in the torrential downpour desperately trying to keep the water moving away from the house. Despite my frantically clearing the one vital, undersized drain that would divert water away from our home, the water level kept rising.

We are fortunate that we have been able to address most of the water management issues on our property, but our experience has been a microcosm of the much larger crisis Maryland faces. A neighbor and I were discussing the upgrades we were making, and I noted the lack of a drain at the bottom of the driveway with a note of disbelief. “Didn’t it rain in the 1930s?” I asked. Her response was spot-on: “It did, but not like this.” She was right. Roughly 30% of the rainstorms that hit Maryland between 2007 and 2016 would have ranked in the top 1% of storms in terms of precipitation had they occurred in the 1950s, and this trend is expected to continue into the future as the warming atmosphere becomes capable of holding more water.

The scale of what will be needed to deal with the increasingly severe impacts of climate change dwarfs the actions we can take as individuals. We are all living surrounded by infrastructure, like

my house, that was built in another century to deal with another climate reality, and that is increasingly failing to meet the demands of the current moment. We must take action together, as communities and as a state, to mitigate the most immediate impacts of climate change. Jurisdictions across Maryland are already spending millions of dollars to combat the effects of extreme flooding and heat events, and those costs are being borne entirely by Maryland taxpayers.

The RENEW Act shifts the financial burden of these mitigation efforts away from Marylanders and toward the out-of-state fossil fuel companies that have contributed the most to anthropogenic climate impacts over the past three decades. These energy costs will not be passed on to consumers, but the funds the RENEW Act would bring in would help to shield Marylanders from some of the worsening toll of climate change. In this time of tightening state and personal budgets, record energy company profits, and ever-more-extreme weather events, the RENEW Act is a prudent investment in Maryland's future.

I thank you all for your consideration.

Source on rainfall data: <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/effects-climate-change-maryland/>