

HB 340 - SUPPORT
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HB 340 - Climate Change - Attorney General Actions, Climate Change Restitution Fund, and
Climate Change Restitution Fund Advisory Council

Meeting of the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 11, 2025

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, on behalf of Elders Climate Action Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB 340.

Elders Climate Action is a nationwide organization devoted to ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and future generations have a world in which they can thrive. The Maryland Chapter has members across the state.

Maryland has been seeing an increase in the devastating effects of climate change for years, but recently the state has been hit with even worse heat waves, flooding, and storms. The cost to Maryland taxpayers to deal with these disasters and to take the other actions required would be staggering.

HB 340 will authorize the state's Attorney General to investigate, prosecute, or defend any suit or action that holds entities accountable for tortious or unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change. The bill makes sure that inaction or deception on the part of these entities is included under tortious behavior. Coal and gas companies have known for decades the damage that fossil fuels can do to the environment. The parallels with the tobacco companies and the successful litigation against them are striking. It's time to make the polluters pay for the damage they have caused.

Also, HB340 calls for the creation of The Change Restitution Fund. All revenue received by the state from judgements or settlements will be added to the fund, which will be used to supplement state programs that mitigate, prevent, or repair damages caused by climate change. These programs will primarily focus on addressing flooding, storm damage, intense heatwaves, droughts, and ecosystem changes.

The distribution of the funds will be decided by The Climate Change Restitution Advisory Council, which will consist of members of the General Assembly, State Secretaries, and representatives from Maryland stakeholder organizations. This collective represents a wide range of interests relating to climate change and will allow for a full discussion and decision on where to allocate funding. The Advisory Council will also be responsible for providing informational

briefings to the Governor, The General Assembly, and The Attorney General on climate change and the allocation of revenue in the Fund.

Fossil fuel companies must be held accountable for their actions and contributions to climate change. We respectfully request a favorable report on HB 340.