

**Testimony on House Bill 620**  
**– Favorable**  
**HB 0620 – Commemorative Months - Maryland Climate Education Month**  
**House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee**  
**March 27, 2026**

Dear Chair Wells, Vice-Chair Kerr and Committee Members,

My name is Ruth White and I live in Howard County MD, in District 13, I am writing in support of HB 0620 – Commemorative Months - Maryland Climate Education Month which proclaims April as Maryland Climate Education Month, and encourages both participation in climate activities, and actions to further Maryland climate commitments. I have been a climate activist for years participating with HoCoClimateAction, CCAN, the Sierra Club and others but this testimony is from me personally not as a representative of these groups.

I remember the first Earth Day in 1970 well as the year I was pregnant with my daughter. My activism now is fueled by my concern for her generation and that of my grandson who if he lives to old age will see the turn of the next century. If we don't radically reduce global greenhouse emissions, I fear for the world he will face. I did not know about climate pollution in 1970 and the challenges my child or her child would face.

On April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day, an estimated 20 million Americans answered Senator Gaylord Nelson's call for a teach-in to demand action for a cleaner, healthier environment. Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" in 1962 led directly to the success of that first earth day by focusing the nation on toxins causing environmental degradation. The first Earth day led to key legislation and creation of the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA). . The first Earth Day focused on pollution of trees, water and land and this continues to be the theme. Now many informally celebrate "Earth Week" or even "April Earth Day Month" and now celebrate globally.

In 1970, I and the general public were unaware of the impact of greenhouse gases in polluting our atmosphere. While scientists understood the greenhouse effect as early as the 1820s, awareness of the climate crisis grew slowly. However, in the late 1980's NASA scientist James Hansen's Congressional testimony about global warming began to convince a larger public. Over time Earth Day celebrations began to include focus on "Climate Pollution" although many in the public, even some who care about the environment from the perspective of the first Earth Day, are unconvinced. Some 2025 polls show that nationally only about 60 percent believe that humans cause the climate crisis.

On the other hand, many of us, many in progressive Maryland, consider human caused climate change an "existential threat" because it disrupts life-sustaining ecosystems and threatens the way of life for billions (as highlighted by UN officials and the International Court of Justice). Many in the U.S. cite the urgent need for immediate, aggressive, and transformative action to mitigate environmental threats and prevent irreversible damage.

Maryland, as the Preamble in HB0620 states: ““ is uniquely positioned to lead in climate change education” because Marylanders know our diverse ecosystems, vulnerable coastal areas, and the Chesapeake Bay are all directly impacted by climate pollution..

HB0620 also states: “ Maryland leads the nation in its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate pollution”. The urgency and the existential threat of the climate crisis, call for a return to Senator Nelson’s example. This crisis merits extended “teach-ins”, this time for a month.

Maryland Climate Education Month will:

- Unify diverse communities around a common threat and opportunities for a better way
- Focus schools at all levels on this issue, and encourage school and community group collaboration
- Encourage schools, communities and workplaces to host guest speakers, cultural events and performances, and educational workshops over a month, not just a day or a week
- Provide an extended time to highlight what each community can do in response.

We must not miss this opportunity to unify our communities around creative action for a better future. For this reason, I urge a favorable report on HB0620.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 0620.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ruth White