

SB0432 - SUPPORT

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SB0432 - The Climate Crimes Accountability Act

Judicial Proceedings Committee
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Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

We respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB0432, the Climate Crimes Accountability Act. This legislation provides Maryland with the legal tools to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for their role in causing climate change and the devastating impacts we are experiencing across our state.

Maryland is on the front lines of the climate crisis, and for far too long taxpayers, small businesses, and farmers have shouldered the full burden of climate change-related costs, even though they are not at fault for the damages.

Sea levels in the Chesapeake Bay have risen approximately 1.5 feet since 1900, and projections show another 2 to 3 feet of rise levels by 2100. Saltwater intrusion is damaging agricultural land and historic sites on the Eastern Shore.

The damage polluters have caused is deadly: In 2025, Maryland recorded 29 heat-related deaths, the highest number since 2012, with Baltimore City experiencing the most fatalities.

Extreme weather events are intensifying, Hurricane Ida's remnants devastated Ellicott City, and Western Maryland is still recovering from flooding in 2025. And the Trump regime has made it clear that disaster relief funds won't be allocated to "blue" states like Maryland.

Just the tobacco industry knew for decades that their products cause cancer and heart disease, fossil fuel companies knew their businesses were causing the climate crisis, and, like tobacco companies, deliberately lied. Exxon's own scientists warned of catastrophic warming back in the 1970s, yet the company spent decades funding campaigns of denial and deception.

This bill:

- Authorizes the Attorney General to investigate, commence, and prosecute or defend any suit or action that holds certain entities accountable for tortious or otherwise unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change
- Exempts potential suits from Maryland's UCATA language applicable to potential suits or actions to ensure that the Attorney General can hold entities accountable based on their proportional responsibility
- Establishes a special fund to hold any payments that are collected through successful actions

Maryland taxpayers desperately need a remedy for the climate catastrophes the fossil fuel industry is responsible for, and The Climate Crimes Accountability Act gives the Maryland Attorney General the tools to seek one.

We strongly urge a favorable report on SB0432.

Thank you for your consideration.