



**In Support of SB0432 The Climate Crimes Accountability  
Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings Hearing Date: February 10, 2026, at 1:00 PM  
Testimony of Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, Co-Founder, Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund,  
Maryland Climate Commissioner\* (for identification purposes only)**

Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB0432 and thank Delegate Ruth and her colleagues for their leadership in bringing forward this important legislation. This bill is about accountability and ensuring that the burden of climate-related destruction does not fall solely on Maryland most vulnerable and taxpayers while those responsible – big oil and gas -- evade responsibility.

This issue is strikingly similar to what we saw with tobacco and opioids.

I grew up in the largest tobacco-producing district in the world. My father, a cancer doctor, saw firsthand how the tobacco industry knowingly misled the public, giving free cigarettes to employees while denying the deadly link to cancer. Day after day, he treated patients suffering and dying from lung cancer. Despite enormous opposition, my father and his colleagues testified before Congress. Their efforts and others led to warning labels, awareness, and eventually a **\$246 billion settlement to states that saved lives and improved public health.**

Big Oil and Gas have followed the same deceptive playbook. They knew over 50 years ago that their products were fueling climate catastrophes, yet they chose profit over responsibility, misleading the public while the damage escalated.

I live in Annapolis, where our home floods so often that we can no longer obtain flood insurance. This is true of a lot of property in Maryland – making it near impossible to sell homes where a mortgage is required. During the summer there are times when it is so hot now that schools close due to extreme heat. Wastewater systems are overrun by extreme rain. Meanwhile, our farmers and watermen are struggling. Climate-related costs are draining Maryland's budget, leaving less money for education, disability services, healthcare, housing, transportation and public safety.

This bill is about fairness. It ensures that the companies responsible for climate damage contribute to the solutions rather than shifting the burden onto Maryland taxpayers. Just as states held Big Tobacco accountable, we must do the same with the fossil fuel industry.

I urge you to support this critical legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

## **Fact Sheet: SB0432 The Climate Crimes Accountability**

### **Addressing Maryland's Budget Crisis**

Maryland is facing a severe budget shortfall, putting critical funding for education, public safety, housing, and transportation at risk.

- Climate-related damages are draining taxpayer dollars at an unsustainable rate: \$228M for flood prevention in Ellicott City.
- \$84M for tidal protection in Annapolis.
- \$950K annually for stormwater infrastructure in St. Mary's County.

**Every dollar spent on the impacts of climate change is a dollar unavailable for other state priorities.**

### **They Knew**

- Over 50 years ago, the oil industry had a deep understanding of the impact that fossil fuels would have on global temperatures.
- The oil companies were warned by their own scientists as far back as 1977 that their product could have “potentially catastrophic consequences.”
- Exxon's own climate modeling predicted today's temperature rise with astonishing accuracy.
- Rather than act on that knowledge, oil industry executives chose to protect their profits by engaging in decades of denial and deceit, casting public doubt on the very science they knew to be true.

### **How the Climate Lawsuit Bill Helps**

- Holds Polluters Accountable Allows Maryland's Attorney General to sue major fossil fuel companies for their role in causing - and misleading the public about - climate change.
- These lawsuits would target the biggest offenders, ensuring accountability while protecting small businesses.
- Protects Maryland Taxpayers Shifts the financial burden of climate-related damages from Maryland families to the companies that caused the crisis.
- Prevents further strain on the state budget, freeing up funds for essential services like education and public safety.
- Creates a Climate Change Mitigation Fund Money recovered through lawsuits will go into a dedicated fund for addressing the impacts of the climate crisis, such as flooding, heatwaves, extreme weather events, and rising sea levels.
- An advisory committee will ensure that resources are used effectively and equitably.

### **Fiscal Responsibility at Its Core**

- Climate-related damages are inevitable, but their costs don't have to fall on taxpayers.
- This bill ensures that polluters—not Marylanders—pay for the damages caused by their lies and greed.