

Testimony on: HB0572 – Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes
Accountability Fund (Climate Crimes Accountability Act)
Committee: Judiciary
Submitting: Rhonda Kranz
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 17, 2026

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting my written testimony in support of HB572 - Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes Accountability Fund (Climate Crimes Accountability Act). I have lived in Maryland for 30 years. I am very concerned about climate change globally but in my own state I am especially concerned that Maryland work toward meeting its climate goals and protect its citizens. We need to make those who pollute responsible for the damage from their “climate crimes.”

The Climate Crimes Accountability Act (HB0572) authorizes the Maryland Attorney General to investigate, commence, prosecute or defend any action by large fossil fuel companies (market capitalization above \$1 billion) for any unlawful conduct (civil or criminal) that has contributed to climate change. Furthermore, HB0572 waives Maryland’s Uniform Contribution Among Joint Tortfeasors Act (UCADA) for actions brought under this bill. Waiving UCADA, facilitates settlements with one or more of the parties held responsible for climate damages. It allows a judge or jury to determine comparative responsibility rather than encouraging additional lawsuits among liable parties to determine relative financial responsibility.

Because of the harm that burning fossil fuels has caused, we need to make the largest companies who caused it pay for the damage from their “climate crimes.” Lawsuits have been filed across the country to hold polluters responsible and to make them pay for climate change impacts affecting many communities. Maryland has ample examples of how climate change has and is affecting our communities from severe flooding to sea level rise to drought. Taxpayers across the state are being forced to bear the cost of addressing these impacts.

It has been well documented that fossil fuel companies like ExxonMobil have known since the 1970’s about the impacts of climate change. Since then they have tried to hide this information and mislead the public. The harm caused by these companies is immense but we rarely see reparations of any substance if at all. Maryland citizens and communities have been and will continue to be the recipient of these “climate crimes” but instead of compensation from these companies, MD taxpayers end up paying for the cost of dealing with the impacts. This has to stop.

We need to make the large companies pay for the harm that burning fossil fuels has caused, we need to make the largest companies who caused it pay for the damage from their “climate crimes.” For these reasons, I support HB572 and urge a FAVORABLE report in Committee.