



**HB0572**

**Climate Crimes Accountability Act**

**Testimony before House Judiciary Committee**

**Hearing February 17, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chair Bartlett and Co-Chair Davis, and members of the committee, my name is Virginia Smith, and I represent the 1700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of HB0572**, which would authorize the Attorney General to investigate, commence, and prosecute or defend any suite or action that holds large fossil fuel companies accountable for libel or criminal conduct that has contributed to climate change, as well as create a Climate Crimes Accountability Fund. We thank Delegate Ruth and her co-sponsors for introducing this bill.

From the major flooding in Western Maryland in 2025 or more frequent and stronger heat waves that caused [34 deaths](#) in 2025, a 25% increase from the year before, it is hard to deny that Maryland is already feeling the financial and health impacts of climate change. The fossil fuel industry has [known](#) since the 1970s that the carbon and other greenhouse gases they were producing were going to lead to the climate change we are seeing here in the state and around the world. They have spent years denying and fighting back against these claims, so they would not need to pay, and continue to profit off our lives for years, but that needs to stop now.

This bill will help do that by allowing the Attorney General to go after large companies who have extracted, refined, or processed coal, oil, or gas for tortious or otherwise unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change through fraud, deception, or any other mechanism, action, inaction, or practice and then use the funds retrieved through these cases to pay for programs that prevent, mitigate, or repair the harm these companies have contributed to.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

**We respectfully urge a favorable report.**

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