



**Testimony on HB 572
Climate Crimes Accountability Act
House Judiciary Committee**

Date: February 17, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

[Maryland Climate Partners](#) strongly supports **HB 572**, the Climate Crimes Accountability Act. This legislation would provide Maryland with critical legal tools to hold major fossil fuel companies accountable for their role in driving climate change and the escalating harms communities across our state are already facing.

Maryland Climate Partners is a coalition of twenty environmental, faith, consumer advocacy, and social justice organizations focused on ensuring equitable implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA). The coalition formed in 2021 to support the passage of bold climate legislation, and we continue to advocate for policies that ensure full and equitable implementation of the CSNA.

Maryland communities are already bearing the costs of climate change. Sea levels in the Chesapeake Bay have risen approximately 1.5 feet since 1900, with projections of an additional 2 to 3 feet by the end of the century, threatening homes, infrastructure, and local economies.¹ Extreme heat is intensifying, and Maryland recorded 29 heat-related deaths in 2025—the highest number since 2012.² Local governments are investing millions in flood mitigation, emergency response, and infrastructure upgrades. As these costs grow, Maryland taxpayers should not be left to shoulder the full financial burden of climate damages linked to corporate misconduct.

HB 572 establishes a clear pathway for accountability. The bill authorizes the Attorney General to pursue litigation against large fossil fuel companies that engaged in fraud or other unlawful conduct regarding climate risks. Like prior public interest litigation against the tobacco and opioid industries, these actions focus not only on product-related harms,

¹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources (2023) “The Economic Cost of Sea Level Rise to Three Chesapeake Bay Communities” https://dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/publication/2003ec_sealevelrise.pdf

² ABC Baltimore News (August, 2025) “Maryland experiences more heat deaths in 2025 than in 2024” <https://www.wmar2news.com/local/maryland-experiences-more-heat-deaths-in-2025-than-in-2024>

but on documented deception that misled policymakers and the public about known dangers.³ The bill also creates a Climate Crimes Accountability Fund to ensure that any damages recovered are directed toward addressing climate-related harms in Maryland, including flood resilience, public health protections, and community-based adaptation efforts.

Importantly, the harms of climate change are not experienced equally. Overburdened and underserved communities face disproportionate exposure to extreme heat, flooding, and air pollution. Many of these communities have fewer resources to recover from climate disasters or invest in protective infrastructure. Ensuring that those who contributed to these harms through unlawful conduct help fund solutions is not only fiscally responsible—it is a matter of environmental and economic justice.

We strongly urge a **favorable report on HB 572**.

³ Union of Concerned Scientists (June, 2025) "The Climate Deception Dossiers"
<https://www.ucs.org/resources/climate-deception-dossiers>