



**Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility supports and urges passage of the
HB 572 Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes Accountability Fund**

Hearing: House Judiciary

February 17, 2026

Position: Favorable

Analysis

Honorable Delegate Ruth and committee members,

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR), an organization founded by physicians with over 800 supporters, supports HB572 because it would make the major fossil fuel companies that knowingly misled the public about the health harms of their product, be held fiscally responsible for the harm that they have caused. At CPSR, our mission is to address the greatest public health threats of all: nuclear war, climate change, and issues related to pollution. We are committed locally to addressing environmental injustice and health disparities.

The story of “big oil” is similar to the story of “big tobacco.” Leaders of both industries [knew](#) about the harm their products were causing to public health for years, covered up and lied to the public as they tried to and successfully influenced public policy. The result was that millions of people were harmed for years after the science was clear. This is a deadly kind of deception. Both industries even used the same public relations firms.

As early as 1950, fossil fuel companies were informed, at an industry meeting, that their product was a major contributor to climate forcing. Later, in 1980, a major industry association hosted science experts who presented a report that use of fossil fuels was a major contributor to CO2 rise that would result in a “global catastrophe by 2067.” Top scientists within the industry predicted accurately what their products were doing. When companies became aware that this climate science could affect their bottom line, they pivoted from research in 1980’s to a “covert climate science disinformation campaign to try to confuse the public and block governmental action.” Fearing that they would face the same fate as the tobacco companies, hundreds of billions of dollars in a 1998 settlement, the fossil fuel industry developed a [“campaign](#) of deception and disinformation about climate science.”

The [health costs](#) from this deception are staggering. The changes in climate from manmade sources of CO2 and other greenhouse gases, caused in a large part by fossil fuels, have resulted

in deaths, illness and injuries from wildfires, major storms and heat waves. Increased pollen has led to an increase in asthma and allergies and spread of mosquitos, ticks and other vectors have caused an increase in infections. In addition, there are the mental health costs of climate change related disruption and all have increased hospital, emergency room and clinic visits. The annual cost in the U.S. has been estimated in the billions of dollars. The cost of illness and death from fossil fuel related air pollution is much greater, a total from both pollution and climate change has been estimated at over \$800 billion annually.

The Maryland Comptroller estimated in 2025, the [climate costs to Maryland](#) for extreme weather events between 1980 and 2024, as \$10-20 billion. She also refers in her report, to the increase in **illness and death** from storms, fires, heat waves, and air pollution effecting Marylanders. The impact falls on the most vulnerable communities.

This deception by the major oil, gas, and coal companies about their product, like the tobacco industry in the last century, has had immense health, morbidity and mortality consequences. As an organization committed to advocating for public health policy that protects the public, we believe that HB572 is important to help this State pay for the harms done to its people. It is appropriate to have monetary consequences when corporations knowingly violate the public trust and cause harm.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility urges you to vote favorably on HB572 and allow the Attorney General to hold these companies responsible for the harm they have cause.

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