



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

***House Bill 572
Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes Accountability Fund***

Position: Support with Amendments
Committee: Judiciary
Date: February 17, 2026
From: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 572 **WITH AMENDMENTS**.

Bill Summary

The bill would authorize the Attorney General to investigate, commence, and prosecute or defend any suit or action that holds certain entities accountable for tortious or otherwise unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change. The bill would establish a new nonlapsing Climate Crimes Accountability Fund where any related settlements would be deposited, used to support OAG's work, and pay for programs that prevent, mitigate, or repair harms from climate change.

Position Rationale

Climate change is an existential threat to our health and safety and poses a real challenge for Maryland. Rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and disruptions to ecosystems are already having devastating consequences for our communities, economy, and public health.

The State will continue to seek penalties and remediation for statewide environmental injuries. The harms addressed by this bill impact all Marylanders; however, these issues frequently have a disproportionate effect on underserved and overburdened populations.

At present, these cases consume substantial State resources due to inherent settlement challenges. Adopting the Attorney General's Uniform Contribution Among Tortfeasors Act (UCATA) amendment would modernize Maryland's approach, facilitating faster and more efficient resolutions. This alignment with national standards ensures the State can effectively investigate and remediate damages impacting its citizens.

Maryland faces escalating shortfalls through Fiscal Year 2028 and uncertain federal policies. Measures that increase expenditures or divert revenue without sustainable funding offsets should be approached with caution. To address the structural deficit and protect essential services, the State must budget strategically while pursuing environmental goals. The Department does not support directing damages and settlement funds to a newly created special fund instead of the General Fund and requests an amendment to remove the creation of this fund.

MDE respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information during its deliberations and issue a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for HB 572.