



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

House Bill 572

Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes Accountability Fund (Climate Crimes Accountability Act)

Date: February 17, 2026
To: Judiciary Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**
From: Matt Stegman,
MD Staff Attorney

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 572**, which sets up the legal framework for Maryland's Attorney General to investigate, prosecute and defend suits that hold entities accountable for tortious or unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change. The bill gives the Attorney General authority to hold entities accountable based on their proportional responsibility. Finally, HB 572 sets up a special fund to hold any monetary awards collected through actions authorized under the bill.

The reality of climate change is very visible to those living on the Bay. Smith Island and Tangier Island are inhabited islands in the mid-Bay whose residents are already losing their homes to sea-level rise. Other previously inhabited islands, such as Sharp's Island and Holland's Island, are completely submerged. We are seeing more powerful storms increasing water pollution from runoff and stream erosion, higher temperatures putting species at risk and changing both water chemistry and underwater vegetation (warmer water holds less oxygen, and also reduces some species of underwater grasses), and rising sea levels causing dangerous flooding.

Left unchecked, climate change threatens Bay recovery, our economy, and our very existence. HB 572 will put Maryland on equal footing with states, counties, and municipalities across the country that have taken action against the entities responsible for contributing towards climate change. Damages recovered under actions taken pursuant to the bill will provide crucial funding for climate resiliency initiatives in the years ahead as Maryland continues to navigate a challenging fiscal landscape.

For these reasons, **CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 572.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.