

CLIMATE X CHANGE

March 11, 2020

BILL: SB 912
TITLE: Climate Crisis and Education Act
POSITION: SUPPORT
HEARING DATE: 3/11/2020
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation
SPONSOR: Senator Benjamin Kramer

Climate XChange – Maryland supports Senate Bill 912 - the **Climate Crisis and Education Act (CCEA)** that would incentivizes the reduction in fossil fuel CO2 emissions by putting an increasing fee on fossil fuels at the point of entry in Maryland, while generating billions of dollars to reinvest in Maryland's economy.

Maryland is in the midst of an air quality crisis. Our state ranks 8th from the bottom in air quality, [according to the U.S. Air Quality Index](#). Baltimore [came in among the 10 worst metropolitan areas in the country](#) in air quality. And, in 2017, [six coal plants in Maryland released an equivalent amount of climate pollution as over 2 million cars](#). As we strive to move towards a pollution free environment, we must consider how to reduce the native health effects of harmful air pollutants and to make this move a **just transition**.

Exposure to air pollution has been associated with many health effects. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), science has proven links between health conditions and the environment. For example, continuous exposure to fossil fuels often leads to detrimental health effects, such as infant mortality, chronic bronchitis, heart disease and strokes. Poor air quality can trigger asthma attacks and elevated blood lead levels in children can cause developmental disabilities. Extreme weather that causes power outages can lead to cases of carbon monoxide poisoning. Vulnerable populations like the elderly and infants are also intensely at risk for heat-related illnesses during heat waves.

One study found that in 2005, the national health burden of air pollution from carbon emissions was between 130,000 and 320,000 premature deaths per year. This was mostly due to emissions from generating electricity, vehicular exhaust... [Another study estimated that fossil fuels burned for home heating \(in 2005\) contributed to around 10,000 excess deaths each year in the U. S.](#), and that fossil fuel use for electricity production contributed to around 21,000 deaths annually.

But, there's another dimension to the dual issues of climate change and air quality: **justice**. The communities hardest hit by climate change, those on the metaphorical frontline of sea level rise and extreme heat in Maryland, are the same that have historically experienced the worst air

pollution in the state. Targeted communities, such as urban areas, low income communities, communities of color are disproportionately harmed by air pollutants.

While addressing climate risks and mitigating their consequences must be among the state's top priorities, we must ensure that economically vulnerable communities be protected from any additional costs in the transition to a clean energy economy. They must not bear the brunt of the burden of implementing policy that will reduce/eliminate carbon in our environment.

The CCEA (SB0912) retains two provisions for benefits to low-income households. One is a cash rebate originally designed to protect low-to moderate-income residents. The other provision exists in the infrastructure fund, which currently allocates 30% of its funds to residents in communities historically pollution-burdened and underserved.

For these reasons and more, Climate XChange urges a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB 912.

Respectfully submitted,

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Cc: Members of the Budget and Finance Committee