

February 16, 2021

BILL: HB0033/SB0076
TITLE: Climate Crisis and Education Act
POSITION: SUPPORT
HEARING DATE: 02/16/2021
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters
SPONSOR: Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo

Rising sea levels, shifting weather patterns, and acidification of our coastal waters are some of the numerous impacts of greenhouse gases in Maryland. Symptoms of climate change are encroaching the globe at every angle. We cannot escape these changes unless we take drastic steps to reduce our fossil fuel CO2 emissions. There is an undeniable desire to have a habitable Earth for future generations. Although we have already begun to make changes, there continue to be emissions being released. As a state, we have already promoted environmentally-conscious practices. Maryland's petroleum consumption is the second-lowest among the states. Maryland is ranked among 10 states with the lowest per capita natural gas use. The purpose of the Climate Crisis and Education Act is to continue these strides to reduce our carbon footprint. Considering this bill's favorability in the last session, it attests to the prioritization of this matter for many constituents.

Additionally, this bill promotes equitable distribution of funds. The bill addresses the disparities the state faces. First, the bill will protect low-income households and those most vulnerable to climate disaster from financial harm. Meaning, this bill will not burden those struggling financially. By addressing socioeconomic status, this bill also addresses another issue: Baltimore's densely populated neighborhoods. Urban, low-income communities suffer in the Urban Heat Island. Meaning, communities that are often overlooked are suffering due to the insensitivity from oil/fossil fuel companies. The compact city-living can increase respiratory and heat illnesses, pandemic risk, and vector-borne diseases. COVID-19 is a familiar foe, and there is no denial of the role of climate change in its spread. COVID-19 continues to affect families in Maryland. As a legislative body, it should be considered how the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions can improve the city of Baltimore and other communities which have felt the brunt force of climate change.

Furthermore, the bill will address inequalities in the education system. Maryland is home to some of the best counties in the country, but there continue to be schools running with insufficient funds. The Climate Crisis and Education bill intend to implement the funds received from increased fossil fuel fees to the state's education system. The bill will administer \$350 million to public education each year. As students from Howard County, we acknowledge the privilege it is to have up-to-date electronics and sufficient textbooks readily available. Unfortunately, this is not the story for many students around the state. Most districts in Maryland do not receive the money they need for students to excel academically and is more apparent in students of color. The allocation of funds and its impacts on the children of the future are invaluable investments.

The fossil fuel fees which will come into effect through the Climate Crisis and Education Act will help in the conversion to renewable energies. Some benefits of this bill include locally produced renewable energy creating jobs, economic vitality, and high investments in public goods.

In short, we have contributed to global greenhouse gases. Like a cancerous mass, the gases will continue to cut off life unless we take action. The environment is pleading for action, yet we continue to ignore its desperation.

As young climate activists, it is disheartening to see a normalization of climate change. There is a glimmer of hope shining from legislation such as the Climate Crisis and Education Act. Promoting equitable and environmentally conscious decisions cannot be compromised for businesses who crave the highest profit margins. We cannot continue to cut corners on an issue that continues to seek dire attention.

We would like to thank those supporting this bill like Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo for continuing this fight for environmental justice.

For these reasons and more, the body of the Howard County Conservancy's Climate Change Institute strongly supports and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT on the HB0033 Climate Crisis and Education Act.

Respectfully submitted,

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cc: Members of the Economic Matters Committee