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# CHESAPEAKE PSR

## PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



### Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 583 – *Climate Solutions Now Act* *Environment and Transportation*

#### Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility is statewide evidenced-based, organization of over 700 physicians, other health professionals and supporters, that addresses the existential public health threats to life on this planet: the climate crisis and the presence of nuclear weapons, We advocate for public policy that addresses these threats informed through the lens of racial justice and equity. As an organization founded by physicians, we understand that prevention is far superior to treatment in reducing costs; death, illness, injury, and suffering.

This bill ensures Maryland will be part of the new green future by:

- Ensuring Maryland is in line with the current climate science by committing us to a 60% reduction in carbon emissions below 2006 levels by 2030 and to reaching net zero emissions by 2045
- Restructuring our approach to climate justice by mandating that a percentage of all future climate spending must go to “disadvantaged” communities in terms of climate change, a term to be defined by experts and stakeholders
- Ensuring that labor voices are represented in our planning process, and that jobs benefit those who need them most
- Taking several immediate steps to reduce emissions, such as planting 5 million native trees by 2030, electrifying state vehicles, requiring several net neutral buildings and mandating energy efficiency increases

The evidence of climate change is on our doorsteps. Rising seas caused by Climate Change result in more frequent flooding especially in [Annapolis where flooding events](#) are likely to occur 360 x a year by 2040. Dorchester County, presently the 4<sup>th</sup> largest county expected to be 14<sup>th</sup> by 2100 [as nearly half the county turns to open water](#). After 1000 rains occurred twice within 2 years, sirens now warn Ellicott City residents after heavy rains.. If emissions continue to rise, mean sea-level in Maryland will likely [rise 2-4 feet by 2100](#). Statistics confirm what Marylanders already know- our summers are heating up and lasting longer. Extreme heat events have increased by more than 100% between the 1980’s and the 2000’s when compared to the 1960s-1970s, a rapid rise that is unprecedented. In addition to all the problems that occur because of this there are specific effects on the health of our citizens particularly our most vulnerable populations.

Patients now suffer more seasonal allergies from plants such as ragweed whose pollen seasons have lengthened with rising temperatures. Levels of pollutants like ozone are higher and put air

quality in the unhealthy zone more often with heat. People with chronic lung conditions have more serious challenges on Code Red, bad-air days. In April 2016 the "[Maryland Climate and Health Profile Report](#)" from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Health Hygiene and University of Maryland School of Public Health noted that extreme heat was associated with heat-related hospitalization especially in Baltimore, increased risk of salmonella infections especially on the Eastern shore and Bay coastal area, hospitalizations from asthma especially in Caucasian children, and heart attacks especially in those over 65 and in non-Hispanic blacks. All of these examples are only expected to increase by 2040. Increases in illness and hospitalization increase healthcare costs. Public health research has also demonstrated that small temperature changes can lead to the emergence of serious insect borne diseases not previously seen in Maryland as well as an increase in the incidence of known vector borne diseases notably Lyme Disease.

[The 4<sup>th</sup> National Climate Assessment from 2019](#) noted that "the health and wellbeing of Americans are already affected by climate change, with adverse health consequences projected to worsen with additional climate change. Climate change affects human health by altering exposures to heat waves, floods, droughts, and other extreme events: vector-, food-, and waterborne infectious diseases; changes in the quality and safety of air, food and water and stresses to mental health and well-being"

The 2019 US call to Action on Climate Health and Equity a Policy Action Agenda noted climate change is a Health Care **Emergency**. This call to Action was signed onto by more than 70 major medical groups. Including The AMA, ACP, AAF, American Academy of Pediatrics to name a few,

Climate Change is an emergency for so many reasons. International experts have urged action on climate with increasing fervor in recent years for good reason: the consequences of staying the course will be highly dangerous.

Maryland Department of the Environment, citing the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and the International Panel on Climate Change, [has adopted a net zero green-house gases goal by 2045](#). The climate Solutions Now bill is a major step towards achieving that goal. We have an opportunity to listen to scientists now while signaling to the nation that Maryland is ready to embrace the new green economy. There is no more time to delay on meaningful climate action.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility urges support for SB414 Climate Solutions Now Act. The public health costs of inaction are too great.

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