

We, the Caucus of African American Leaders and Claudia Barber, Esquire are reaching out on behalf of the Rebuild Maryland Coalition. We are advocating for a favorable vote from the Economic Matters Committee on HB 516, the Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act of 2024 (CCEJ).

I am particularly impressed by the CCEJ's emphasis on highlighting the root cause of climate change - the influx of harmful air pollutants, primarily from fossil fuels used in transit and heating industries. Maryland voters, special interest groups, and elected officials overwhelmingly agreed to focus on practical solutions like reducing greenhouse gas emissions when we passed the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

Now, we must agree on the mechanisms we'll use to fund the programming necessary to sustain the physical infrastructure and livelihood of Marylanders.

Equally important is the priority on disproportionately affected communities, ensuring that the benefits of climate action are accessible to those most in need. The innovative approach of creating two funds from the revenue generated from the transit and heating fee is a further testament to our commitment. The Household and Employer Benefit Fund and the Climate Crisis Infrastructure Fund were created to address both economic and environmental aspects of climate change while keeping aligned with the Justice40 Initiative. These funds not only protect disproportionately affected households and energy-intensive, trade-exposed employers but also invest in the improvement of the health and welfare of our citizens. The inclusion of a "polluter pays" provision without passing fees to end-users, is a crucial step towards environmental justice and protects our most vulnerable citizens.

The CCEJ would put Maryland on a commonsense, practical pathway toward a sustainable, vibrant economy. It will generate nearly \$18 billion by 2034 for investment in clean energy infrastructure while providing protective benefits to Maryland's trade-exposed small businesses and its most vulnerable populations: low- and moderate-income and overburdened and underserved households.

**I(We) respectfully urge a favorable committee report on HB 615** By supporting this legislation, you will contribute to Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goals, promote environmental justice, and fortify our state against the impacts of climate change.