

Prominent Maryland Climate Scientists Call on General Assembly to Pass Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Act SB 516/HB 1158

Unprecedented letter to lawmakers comes in wake of stunning new science showing Maryland's vulnerability in a rapidly warming world

March 4, 2019

From:
Concerned Maryland Climate Scientists

To:
Delegates and Senators
Maryland General Assembly

Dear legislators,

We are Maryland-based scientists reaching out to you because our state and our planet are in the midst of a full-blown climate crisis. A consensus of top climate scientists worldwide now holds that only a swift transition to carbon-free energy will stave off a planet-wide catastrophe. As such, we urge you to support the Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Act to put our state on the path to 100% renewable electricity as quickly as possible.

Successive scientific reports have recently provided evermore documentation of harmful climate trends already underway. In our state of Maryland, scientists have been making similar projections as far back as 2008 and earlier. Continued growth in emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases will lead to longer heat waves in Maryland as well as more intense storms, longer droughts, and greater sea-level rise.

Here's the hopeful message: The worst effects of climate change can still be avoided by very rapid reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases over the next thirty years. An October report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change showed that we can still avoid dangerous levels of warming, but only by reducing global carbon dioxide emissions to a net of zero by no later than 2055. For example, if emissions continue to grow, we could face an increase of four feet of sea-level rise worldwide during this century, and more than ten feet in the next century. Yet if reductions are sufficient to meet the goals of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, we will have to contend with less than two feet of sea level rise in Maryland by the end of the 21st century.

However, the current federal administration has aggressively sought to roll back requirements to reduce emissions from power plants and vehicles, and to plug natural gas leaks. The administration is promoting increased production of coal and oil from public lands and offshore waters. In 2018, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions actually increased by 3.4%.

Until there are more rational federal policies it is up to states, local governments, businesses and institutions to rapidly reduce their emissions. Fortunately, many states are taking action to do just that. Maryland Governor Larry Hogan penned a Washington Post opinion piece in December expressing his commitment to the emissions reductions required under the Paris agreement.

But Governor Hogan and the General Assembly will have to do more than just make pledges. You have to act. In the current Maryland legislative session, you must consider passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, which will increase the required renewable share of electricity in our state to 50% by 2030 and study the best way to achieve 100% clean electricity by 2040. This is necessary if the state is to meet its statutory commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all sources, including transportation, by 40% by 2030.

As one of the most affluent and best-educated states in the most powerful nation on Earth, Maryland has an obligation to lead. Please support and pass the Clean Energy Jobs Act this year.

Signed,

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Gerrit Knaap, Member, Scientific and Technical Working Group, Maryland Commission on Climate Change; Professor and Director, National Center for Smart Growth, University of Maryland

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