



HB0033 – Climate Crisis and Education Act

Presented to the Hon. Delegate Dereck E. Davis and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee
February 18, 2021 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges Members of the House Economic Matters Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB0033 – Climate Crisis and Education Act**, sponsored by Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. Climate change is increasingly threatening human health, with unique adverse reproductive and sexual health consequences related to air, water, and soil pollution, extreme heat, and natural disasters. The fossil fuels industry has been a major contributor to climate change and this bill would require them to take financial responsibility for the harm caused by their industry which disproportionately impacts low-income communities and [people of color](#).

Research has demonstrated the reproductive health outcomes associated with environmental pollution include infertility, abnormal menstruation and puberty, endometriosis, recurrent pregnancy loss, polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), fetal death, prenatal growth abnormalities, reduced gestational period, low birth weight,¹ pregnancy-induced hypertension and preeclampsia,² and genital and breast cancers.³ Additionally, rising global temperatures is making heat a more serious threat to pregnant persons going forward; exposure to unusually hot temperatures can lead to changes in length of gestation, birth weight, stillbirth rates, and neonatal stress.⁴ These health outcomes can cause enduring mental and physical trauma to pregnant persons and the infants they deliver. Substantial research has shown that low birth weight infants may be more at risk for many health problems; some may become sick in the first six days of life or develop infections, others can suffer from long term problems such as delayed motor skills and social development or learning disabilities.⁵ Additionally, increased instances of natural disasters result in a disruption of reproductive health services which can lead to unplanned pregnancies; conversely, natural disasters can displace families and leave them financially unstable

¹ Rashtian, J. et al. “Water and soil pollution as determinant of water and food quality/contamination and its impact on female fertility.” *Reprod Biol Endocrinol* 17, 5 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12958-018-0448-5>

² Wang, A et al. “Environmental influences on reproductive health: the importance of chemical exposures.” *Fertility and sterility* vol. 106,4 (2016): 905-29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fertnstert.2016.07.1076>

³ Bhatt, R.V. “Environmental Influence on Reproductive Health.” *International Journal for Gynecology and Obstetrics*, 70: (2000) 69-75. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7292\(00\)00221-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7292(00)00221-6)

⁴ Bekkar B, et al. “Association of Air Pollution and Heat Exposure With Preterm Birth, Low Birth Weight, and Stillbirth in the US: A Systematic Review.” *JAMA Netw Open*. (2020); 3(6):e208243. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.8243

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reproductive and Birth Outcomes and the Environment. Retrieved <https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showRbBirthOutcomeEnv>

resulting in reduced fertility.⁶ In both cases, individuals lose their reproductive freedom to choose when to become pregnant.

It is imperative that the fossil fuels industry be held financially accountable to the Maryland communities which have been most adversely impacted by climate change and pollution, and continue to face threats of natural disaster on the eastern shoreline and extreme heat in urban areas. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0033 - Climate Crisis and Education Act.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

⁶ Tobin-Gurley, J., et al. "Displaced single mothers in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: resource needs and resource acquisition." *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*. (2010): 28, no. 2: 170-206.