



SB0518 - Environment - Office on Climate Change - Establishment

Presented to the Hon. Paul Pinsky and
Members of the Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
February 10, 2021 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a **favorable report on SB0518 - Environment - Office on Climate Change - Establishment**, sponsored by Senator Kathy Klausmeier.

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. In doing so, we support the establishment of the Office on Climate Change to ensure the Commission's recommendations are implemented. The effects of climate change are increasingly threatening human health, with unique adverse reproductive and sexual health consequences related to air, water, and soil pollution, extreme heat, and natural disasters.

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 Furthermore, 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

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>

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

The Commission on Climate Change has clearly outlined the threats of climate change to Marylanders with emphasis on the need to protect the most vulnerable populations, including low-income urban residents who are more exposed to environmental pollution and extreme heat, and coastal populations at higher risk of flooding and mold exposure.⁷ Establishing the Office on Climate Change is essential to implement solutions which will mitigate further environmental degradation and protect human health and access to healthcare. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0518**. 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

⁷ Grumbles, B. "2020 Annual Report" Maryland Commission on Climate Change. November 15, 2020. Retrieved https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Commission/2020%20MCCC%20Annual%20Report%20DRAFT_11.09.20%20Meeting.pdf