Maryland boasts a total of 4,000 miles of shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Potomac River. The unique topography of our state makes all Maryland residents, not only those in coastal regions, particularly susceptible to the impacts of rising sea levels. Flooding attributed to climate change is not only an issue on the Eastern Shore, but has affected communities across the state. Over the past few years extreme rain events that can be connected to climate change have destroyed buildings, business, and homes in Ellicott City and the Baltimore region. Much further inland in Frederick, flooding caused millions of dollars of damage to MARC rail lines as well as roads, businesses, and homes.

Climate change will have significant social and economic impacts globally, nationally, and in the state of Maryland. We have the opportunity and responsibility to address it. Climate change consequences including rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, as well as more frequent and intense natural disasters. These are likely to damage critical infrastructure, lower workforce performance, and impede economic growth. Unless policymakers promptly address this issue both by global changes that address the things causing climate change and through regional policies to adapt to its effects, climate change threatens to wreak havoc on property, resources, and the prosperity of state, national, and global economy both now and going forward.

Maryland’s Eastern Shore communities are particularly threatened by the effects of climate change, but communities across the state will face new challenges as well:

- Maryland boasts a total of 4,000 miles of shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Potomac River. The unique topography of our state makes all Maryland residents, not only those in coastal regions, particularly susceptible to the impacts of rising sea levels. Flooding attributed to climate change is not only an issue on the Eastern Shore, but has affected communities across the state. Over the past few years extreme rain events that can be connected to climate change have destroyed buildings, business, and homes in Ellicott City and the Baltimore region. Much further inland in Frederick, flooding caused millions of dollars of damage to MARC rail lines as well as roads, businesses, and homes.
• Flooding is far from the only environmental concern in Maryland. Maryland has the worst air quality on the East Coast, so making a shift towards cleaner energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions is crucial. Additionally, low-income residents and people of color bear a disproportionate share of the consequences of the climate crisis, and are overwhelmingly affected by air pollutants and the carbon dioxide emissions driving climate change. Improving our air quality would contribute to making Maryland more equitable.

• On Maryland’s Eastern Shore extreme weather and the rising sea levels poses a severe threat to communities. The combined effects of rising seas and shrinking land on the Eastern Shore are expected to get worse going forward, increasing. Specifically, there are 12 communities on the Eastern Shore that already face frequent flooding as a result of climate change, which is more than any other state except Louisiana. At least 10 percent of the land in these communities are flooded more than 25 times per year. This frequent flooding has affected basic infrastructure like plumbing, causing serious problems for households and businesses. And, the neighborhoods that are most affected are majority Black communities and home to people with low incomes who have fewer resources to make repairs.

• Coastal flooding also threatens industries that are central to the state’s economy, particularly for Eastern Shore communities. The agriculture industry is threatened by the saltwater makes its way into farmland, resulting in soil that is less hospitable and fertile to grow crops. Additionally, the seafood industry is at risk from the rising temperatures and sea levels. These lead to the loss of coastal habitats that sustain food sources for many fish and crabs and greater ocean acidity, which has made the shellfish population more vulnerable. Likewise, the tourism industry will be affected as rising sea levels erode and even destroy sand beaches, which are a significant source of economic activity for coastal communities.
Recent Progress

Maryland has taken a number of positive steps to reduce carbon emissions in the state and address climate change in recent years. For example, in the 2021 legislative session:

- **Consideration of Climate and Labor** – Requires the Maryland Public Service Commission, which regulates utility companies, to take into account climate change and greenhouse gas emissions when it evaluates utility plans. This is a start to greater accountability and regulation as it relates to activities that heavily contribute to climate change.
- **Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act** - Mandates that starting in 2023, all contracts for state-purchased buses must be for zero-emission vehicles, eventually leading to a complete transition of the whole bus fleet. These buses will save the state money over time, protect the health of Marylanders, and reduce air pollution. There is strong evidence that exhaust pollution causes long-term damage to lung development in children.

Continuing Progress

There is more state policymakers can do to address short- and long-term community needs related to climate change.

- **Communities on the front lines should be protected** - Both state and local policymakers need to be intentional about protecting those who are at the greatest risk (low-income communities and people of color)
- **Energy transition** - The state should continue to pursue aggressive goals for generating energy from renewable sources like solar and wind, and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of state government
- **Going beyond electricity generation** - Putting greater focus on public transit will enable the state to further reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Linking public investments to high-quality jobs** - renewable energy infrastructure projects should include training and worker protections to ensure that these sustainable investments create high-quality jobs
- **Modernized Infrastructure** - Repairing aging water and gas systems would provide significant health and safety benefits (as well as benefits in cost, energy, and emissions). This change is especially necessary considering the reality that there have been a number of explosions in homes in Maryland communities due to aging pipelines

How is climate change currently affecting your community?
How could state or local investment help improve conditions today or protect your community from further effects?