

Remarks at Press Conference to override Gov. Hogan's veto of the Clean Energy Jobs Act.
Rev. Mary Gaut
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For more than 35 years, I've served as a Presbyterian minister in six Maryland congregations, and later as the executive for the Presbytery of Baltimore which is made up of 67 churches. Throughout my ministry my faith has called me to honor God by caring for my neighbors and for the earth itself on which each of our lives depends.

Today, I am deeply troubled by the way our energy production is hurting every one of us, our neighbors near and far and threatens the health and even the survival of our children's and grandchildren's generations. Over half of our state's electricity from fossil fuels, which pollute the air and damage our climate and current measures to reduce this will be found to be too little too little too late. The science is clear and so is the moral urgency. Climate change is already threatening our health and our coastal neighborhoods and towns and the future effects are projected to be daunting unless we act now

I have witnessed a quiet and growing movement afoot in Maryland's congregations as increasing numbers are doing their part to care for the earth and combat climate change as an integral component of their faith practices. People of faith in Maryland are waking up to the injustice of fossil fuel pollution causing greater harm to the poor and communities of color. And they know healthy communities require preparing people for the jobs of the future. Last year over a thousand concerned people in 85 houses of worship put postcards into their collection plates in support of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, which faith leaders delivered to our legislators at a prayer breakfast in Annapolis last February. They are serious about this and expect their elected representatives to be serious too.

I'm proud to be among the bishops and senior leaders of the Ecumenical Leaders Group who, for the past 4 years, have been speaking out for cleaner energy on behalf of Maryland's largest Christian denominations: Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, United Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ and others. And we're standing alongside so many other sisters and brothers in faith: the Baltimore Jewish Council, the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland, and over 230 Maryland faith leaders of many traditions who view shifting to clean power as a moral issue. Last year, the Maryland Catholic Conference was more vocal on climate policy in Annapolis than ever before, urging legislators to consider the teachings of Pope Francis in discerning their position on the Clean Energy Jobs Act.

Gov. Hogan's veto claimed that the modest and temporary financial impacts of this bill would be "harmful to ratepayers." But the people I know and minister to and with do not think of themselves primarily as ratepayers. They think of themselves as parents and neighbors and citizens who want to do the RIGHT thing to insure a healthy present and future.

Our faith traditions are insistent that a moral consciousness must inform everything we do. Increasing clean, renewable energy addresses the moral urgency of how we use nature's resources, and how our actions impact our neighbors. Faith leaders across Maryland are speaking out for reinstating the Clean Energy Jobs Act not merely as prudent political action and effective energy policy, but also as an ethical mandate. Thank you.