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**Testimony of  
Governor Martin O'Malley  
State of Maryland**

**before**

**The United States Senate  
Environment and Public Works Committee**

September 26, 2007

Madame Chair, Ranking Member Inhofe, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is my distinct honor and privilege to testify before you today about a global issue that has become a very real local issue today for the citizens of the great State of Maryland. I would also like to give special thanks to Senators Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin, from my home state, for their extraordinary leadership and help in bringing about this opportunity.

In Maryland, we have over 4,000 miles of coastline -- 4,000 miles -- this is more coastline than the State of California. Maryland is in a very precarious position when it comes to the impacts of climate change. Our region is ranked third in the nation terms of our vulnerability to sea level rise. We are third, behind only Louisiana and South Florida. In Maryland, climate change and sea level rise are at our doorstep.

While we are fortunate enough to hug the Chesapeake Bay, a fragile estuary, it also means for us that the impacts of climate change have already been detected. Historic tide-gauge records show that sea levels have risen one-foot within Maryland's coastal waters over the last century. Due, in part to naturally occurring regional land subsidence, the Chesapeake



Bay region is currently experiencing sea level rise at a rate nearly double the world-wide average.

There is now near universal scientific consensus that the world climate is changing. Scientists estimate that temperature will rise between 1.98 - 11.52° F and that our sea level will rise as much as 7 to 23 inches over the next century. If left unchecked, these estimates will translate into devastating impacts for Maryland's citizens, its property, its bountiful natural resources, and the investments of its taxpayers.

Thirteen chartered islands and large expanses of tidal wetlands within the Chesapeake Bay have already disappeared. Each year, the State loses approximately 580 acres of land to shore erosion.

Current scientific research indicates that the rate of sea level rise is starting to accelerate in Maryland waters. The result of such a rise will be a dramatic intensification of the impacts from coastal flood events; increased shore erosion; the intrusion of salt-water into our freshwater aquifers - many of which are used for potable water supply; and submergence of tidal wetlands, low-lying lands and even the Chesapeake's last inhabited island community, Smith Island.

In Maryland, we do not have time to wait. Nor would I suggest, does the country have time to wait. Climate change is perhaps one of the most daunting challenges facing Maryland. The time is upon us to take action to begin shaping our own future in the face of this threat. Decisions we make today will influence Maryland's health and vitality long into the future.

We now know with certainty that human activities -- including coastal development, the burning of fossil fuels and increasing greenhouse gas emissions -- are contributing to both the causes and consequences of climate change. In Maryland, as a State, we are implementing aggressive initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions:

- We are a full fledged member of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative - a voluntary collaboration of 11 states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the power plant sector.
- We have adopted the California Clean Cars standards which will require cleaner and more fuel efficient cars in our state by 2011.

- We have established a Commission on Climate Change and have charged this Commission to recommend Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals and to prepare Maryland's Plan of Action.
- We established a goal to reduce our per capita electricity consumption by 15% by 2015.
- We are diversifying our energy portfolio with clean renewables like solar, wind and bio-diesel and bio-mass, and have recently adopted one of the most aggressive laws in the nation to require two percent of Maryland's electricity, or approximately 1,500 megawatts of power, to come from solar energy by 2022.

Maryland will continue to be a leader. We intend to be the first state in the nation to develop a long range strategy to plan for and adapt to the changes we will face along our coast caused by climate change. Many have asked why a small state like Maryland would take these actions. The answer is, first, because we have an immediate problem. Second, Honorable Members of the Committee, it is the right thing to do. We know that the best way to address this issue is with global action. The next best - is acting country-by-country, as over 160 of our fellow nations have done. The next best option is to take action state by state.

Maryland will continue to be a leader. With the help of Senators Mikulski and Cardin, we will continue to do what is right for our state. Third best, however, is simply not good enough. We need our federal government to act. State-by-state reductions simply don't make sense for this global problem and the time is now for federal action on climate change issues.

We have a long history with environmental challenges in this country. Many challenges are local and are appropriately dealt with at the state level. But on national issues, we seem to go one of two ways. The federal government enacts laws, develop standards, and the states follow and implement. Or, when the federal government fails to lead, states have no choice but to step up and act. This appears to be one of those occasions.

Currently, 26 states have initiated actions related to climate change. Over 20 states have set substantial greenhouse gas reduction targets. Using the state efforts as a model, there are many programs that can radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a reasonable cost. The time has come to develop

national programs that effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning power plants, from our automobiles, and a multitude of other sources.

We must transition from a carbon-based economy to a green, sustainable economy - an economy that does not prolifically emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as a byproduct of progress. Economic progress at the cost of environmental sustainability is not progress at all.

Furthermore, we must proactively plan for the consequences of climate change by amending coastal zone management plans, integrating the consequences of climate change into federal programs for flood and shoreline management. Federal agencies should be coordinating to ensure that we adapt to climate change as a nation.

When given a choice between progress and regression, the people of Maryland always choose progress. We have an unshakeable belief in what Carroll Quigley, a historian at Georgetown, called "future preference" - the idea that "tomorrow can be better than today and that each of us has a personal and moral responsibility to make it so."

Why is sustainability so important? Because, as the old Native American proverb goes, "we do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Why we are so concerned about energy efficiency and placing an emphasis on "green?" Because, in the words of Maryland's own, columnist Thomas Friedman: "the people who will be harmed the most by the climate-energy crisis haven't been born yet."

Public service is about making decisions, many for which the consequences will be felt long after we're gone, many for which we may not be around to enjoy the benefits. In the short time we have in these jobs, and on this earth for that matter, let's resolve to put aside the impulse for instant gratification...and instead, embrace a compact with the grandchildren who are yet to be born.

In the finest American tradition, let's prefer their future over our present...forsaking patchwork quick-fixes for enduring solutions. Let's do for them what the Greatest Generation and our forefathers did unflinchingly for us - relinquish the comforts of today in the name of a better tomorrow.

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing our generation today - we must, and we can, collectively find a way ultimately to address the problem to achieve sustainability, as a State and as a Nation.

Thank you very much for your time in considering my testimony today.