

MATHIAS DE SOUSA HBCU LEGISLATIVE NIGHT

Inspiring Maryland's Next Generation
of Black Environmental Justice
Leaders



PEOPLE. POWER. PLANET.

WHO WE ARE

The NAACP Maryland State Conference (MSC) **Environmental and Climate Justice Committee** empowers community leaders to address human and civil rights issues resulting from environmental and climate-related causes. To do this, we focus on the following:



People

Strengthen
Community Resilience



Power

Advance Clean
Energy



Planet

Reduce Harmful
Emissions

Young people are worried about climate change and see the impact of generations of environmental injustice. They want change. If we empower our brilliant HBCU students with the tools to understand the legislative process and the power of advocacy, they will lead us to a greener and more equitable tomorrow.

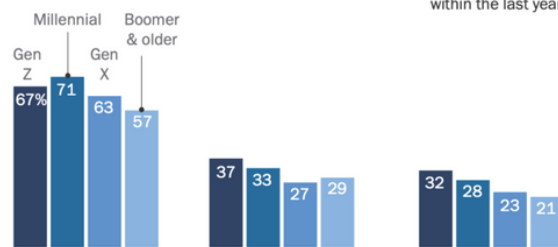
Gen Z, Millennials more active than older generations addressing climate change on- and offline

% of U.S. adults who say ...

Climate should be top priority to ensure sustainable planet for future generations

Addressing climate change is my top personal concern

Have personally taken action to help address climate change within the last year



"The NAACP would be nothing without our grassroots community. We want to empower our young people to be the grassroots leaders of tomorrow. Our HBCU students are the future. We need their brilliance to lead in the industries that will save this nation and this planet."

Willie Flowers
President, NAACP MD State Conference

HBCU LEGISLATIVE NIGHT

The **Matthias De Sousa HBCU Environmental and Climate Justice Legislative Night** brought students, environmental advocates, and Maryland legislators together to discuss proposed legislation and environmental justice. The event's purpose was to empower HBCU students to understand the legislative process, the power of their voice, and climate and environmental issues facing Marylanders.

Students heard legislators and advocates discuss [our 2023 legislative priorities](#) for environmental justice and clean energy. They learned about the connection between the priority laws and how they lead to investment in the green energy sector, especially wind energy, and the growth of career opportunities in this sector.

We brought together students from all of Maryland's HBCUs; Morgan State University, Bowie State University, Coppin State University, and University of Maryland Eastern Shore. For many students, this was their first opportunity to meet students from other HBCUs and they were excited to grow their networks of Black students who care about climate justice.



BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND LEARNING BY DOING

HBCU Legislative Night was a unique experiential learning experience for students. Speaking with legislators gave students an opportunity to think critically about environmental justice issues in Maryland. This kind of hands-on learning experience can boost student self-confidence, give them valuable career insight and make them stand out to future employers. [Research has found](#) that participation in experiential learning experiences related to social issues leads to a long-term increase in socially responsible behavior among college students.



Students had a chance to ask legislators questions, share their concerns, and learn about local legislative strategies to advance environmental justice. This event gave students the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in legislative advocacy. We hope this was a transformative experience for students, inspiring them to become more involved in local environmental advocacy.



OUR EQUITY PARTNER AND LEAD SPONSOR THE SIERRA CLUB - MARYLAND CHAPTER



This event was made possible through the generous contributions of our lead sponsor, the [Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter](#). The photo to the left shows student raffle winners with Sierra Club, Maryland members (third from the left): Lindsey Mendelson, Rosa Hance, and Paula Posas.

"It means a lot for us to be part of this event, to remember our history and envision our future. The Sierra Club is a proud partner and supporter of this transformative work."

Josh Tulkin
Director, Sierra Club - Maryland Chapter



SIERRA CLUB
MARYLAND CHAPTER

EXPLORE, ENJOY, PROTECT THE PLANET.

VIRTUAL ADVOCACY TRAINING

On Thursday, February 9th, we hosted our first event, a virtual advocacy training for HBCU students. We partnered with the Maryland League of Conservation Voters to facilitate the training that gave students an overview of the legislative process and a foundation to understand advocacy and grassroots organizing in the environmental justice movement.



"Our HBCU Students are the future of which Dr. King dreamed."

Staci Hartwell
Chair, NAACP MSC Environmental and Climate Justice Committee

HBCU LEGISLATIVE NIGHT IN ANNAPOLIS

The following Wednesday, February 15th, we gathered in Annapolis with legislators, advocates, and HBCU students for an engaging night of conversation around environmental justice in Maryland. Please look at [the program](#) for the full schedule and a list of speakers. After the presentations and discussion, we all shared a catered meal together.



We hosted the event at Asbury United Methodist Church, a church founded in 1830 that served as a gathering place for Civil Rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, John Lewis, and more, and continues to be an important site for political activism.

HONORING MATHIAS DE SOUSA

We named the event after Mathias de Sousa to honor his legacy. De Sousa was a skilled sailor and fur trader in colonial Maryland. He was elected to the Maryland Legislator in 1641, making him the first Black person to serve on any legislative body in what would become the United States. De Sousa's election to the colonial Maryland legislature was a huge accomplishment that paved the way for future generations of Black leaders in Maryland.



HBCU STUDENT VOICES



"This event was a great opportunity for University of Maryland, Eastern Shore students to meet and talk to legislators. It feels like legislators often forget about the Eastern Shore and leave us out of important conversations. The Eastern Shore faces unique environmental challenges. For example, we barely have any charging stations for electric vehicles."

Cairo H.
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

"As a Health Education Major, I'm learning about the connection between the environment and public health. It's been eye-opening to learn about environmental racism and how it impacts things like access to clean water. I'm passionate about this topic and want to understand more about the legislative process in Maryland."

Moneffa P.
Morgan State University

"The first step to creating change is caring. My interest in climate justice led me to become a Green Ambassador on campus. We work to make our campus greener and more sustainable. I am here to gain knowledge about the legislative process and what's happening in Maryland. I hope to be able to share my knowledge and educate others."

Rocky A.
Bowie State University



UNDOING THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IN MARYLAND



Maryland, like much of the US and the world, has been impacted by environmental racism, where environmental hazards are systematically placed in low-income communities and communities of color. One example of environmental racism in Maryland is the concentration of four fossil fuel power plants in the majority Black area of Brandywine, Prince George's County. While the power plants serve people across the state and in DC, Brandywine residents are disproportionately exposed to hazardous pollution levels.

We can and will fight back against environmental racism and injustice in Maryland. We are hopeful that we will be able to advance many of our legislative priorities this year to invest in clean energy, increase community power and address the harms of generations of environmental injustice.

"It was illuminating to learn about the environmental issues in Prince Georges's County. It's so unfair that Prince Georges's County, as a Black community, is exposed to pollution from power plants that serve other areas. My grandparents, who raised me, live in Prince Georges's County, and I wonder how this impacts their health."

Jerome F.
University of Maryland, Eastern Shore

A PROMISING MOMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN MARYLAND

This historic moment in Maryland is full of potential to advance environmental justice; we have a new administration and democratic control of the House and Senate. Maryland has a record number of Black and female legislative leaders, including Aruna Miller, the first woman of color to be lieutenant Governor; Anthony Brown, the first Black Attorney General; Brooke Lierman, the first woman Comptroller; Adrienne Jones, the first woman, and first Black person to serve as Speaker of the House and of course our first Black Governor, Wes Moore.

Governor Moore is a strong advocate for environmental justice and green energy. At the national level, the Inflation Reduction Act will invest \$369 billion to fight climate change, including \$60 billion to address environmental injustice. With so many allies in power and unprecedented national investment to fight climate change, this is the perfect time to advance policies that support clean energy and environmental justice.

There are many bills in the 2023 Legislative Session that support our priorities. A few will be highlighted below, but we encourage you to visit our website to view all our [2023 Legislative Priorities](#).

"I'm so happy to be part of this gathering of HBCU students and legislators. When it comes to environmental injustice, those closest to the problem are also those closest to the solution, but rarely those closest to power. That is why we need to uplift Black voices to lead the movement for environmental justice."

Delegate Gabriel Acevero



GOOD LAWS LEAD TO GOOD JOBS

INVESTING IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

Maryland will need to increase investment in renewable energy to meet our ambitious goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2045. Investing in clean energy is good for the planet, the economy, and students starting their careers. Wind energy, in particular, is a rapidly growing sector that has the potential to provide high-quality jobs in manufacturing, installation, and operation. This sector will provide students with the chance to develop a fulfilling career in an expanding industry that is focused on creating a more sustainable future.



The clean energy sector is one of the fastest-growing sectors in America's economy. According to [the Clean Jobs America 2020 report](#), the clean energy sector added jobs 70% faster than the overall economy. Clean energy jobs now outnumber fossil fuel jobs 3-to-1. Between the Chesapeake Bay and the Eastern Shore, Maryland is very well positioned to harness offshore wind energy.

2023 Legislative Highlight: The POWER Act

The Promoting Offshore Wind Energy Resources (POWER) Act ([SB 781](#) / [HB 793](#)) will allow Maryland to harness our most abundant energy resource - offshore wind. Investing in offshore wind will create thousands of well-paying jobs for Marylanders, reduce energy costs for residents, and lower emissions. Learn more about [the POWER Act](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

FIGHTING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IN OXON HILL

"The site in Oxon Hill was chosen because it would be 'cost effective' with no input from the community. This technology is new and comes with fire risks and other long-term risks that are not fully understood. We are sick of Black communities being guinea pigs. That is why I am asking questions and fighting back."

Patricia Monroe
Oxon Hill Resident



PEPCO didn't consult the Oxon Hill community when they chose the majority Black neighborhood as the location for a lithium-ion battery storage facility. Lithium-ion battery storage facilities are a known fire hazard, and toxic chemicals are released into the air if they do catch on fire. The other proposed lithium-ion facility in Maryland would be built deep in the woods in Rockville, yet the Oxon Hill location would be less than 75 meters from the closest neighbor and less than 200 meters from a daycare center.

2023 Legislative Highlight: Climate and Environmental Equity Act

The fight over the Oxon Hill Lithium-Ion Storage facility is an example of how environmental racism continues to impact communities in Maryland. The Climate and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 ([SB 743/HB 840](#)), will help end environmental racism by strengthening the process to obtain permits for projects that threaten our air, land, water, and people.

Take a moment to [write a letter](#) to your representatives to support this bill to ensure a safer environment for all Marylanders.

OUR LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS

All of our legislative partners center equity in the environmental policies they advance. Several of our legislative partners joined us to discuss the bills they sponsored this session.

Energy Efficiency for Low-Income Households

Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

Delegate Charkoudian sponsored ([HB 169](#)/[SB 524](#)) to ensure low and medium-income Maryland households have access to the benefits of existing energy efficiency and conservation programs. These programs have primarily benefited higher-income households, even though lower-income households need energy savings the most.



Reclaim Renewable Energy

The Reclaim Renewable Energy Act of 2023 ([SB 590](#)/[HB 718](#)), will exclude energy from sources that cause a lot of pollution, including trash incineration and factory farm waste, from being eligible to be classified as renewable energy. These energy sources cause a lot of pollution that disproportionately harms communities of color.



Maryland the Beautiful Act of 2023

Delegate Dana Stein

The Maryland the Beautiful Act ([SB 791](#)/[HB 1031](#)), sponsored by **Delegate Stien**, will conserve a significant portion of Maryland's land as green spaces and ensure equitable access to the greenspaces.

SUSTAINABILITY AT OUR EVENT

Sustainability is a top priority for us. We organized transportation to and from the event, composted food waste, and did a sustainability audit to understand the environmental impact of our event and move us toward our goal of hosting zero-waste events in the future. Read our [Sustainability Report](#) for more details about how we advanced sustainability in three main areas:



Transportation

Our event generated approximately 0.13 metric tons of emissions from transit, compared to an average of 2 metric tons for an event of this size



Waste Reduction

We diverted 50% of waste from the event to composting and recycling rather than a landfill



Sourcing

We sourced food and supplies for the event from local, sustainable partners

SUSTAINABILITY PARTNER THE BALTIMORE COMPOST COLLECTIVE

We were thrilled to partner with the Baltimore Compost Collective to compost food waste from our event. [The Baltimore Compost Collective \(BCC\)](#) is a Black-owned and youth-led compost collection service that is making an impact in several areas: food production via urban farming, job creation, greenhouse gas reduction, and education/training for youth. BCC supports youth entrepreneurship by employing teenagers and giving valuable workforce training.



CONCLUSION



It was inspiring to see HBCU students' passion for environmental and climate justice. We are grateful to all the students, volunteers, legislators, advocates, and partners who made HBCU Legislative Night such a success!

"If we want there to be a tomorrow, we have to act today."

Jenee, Coppin State University

THANKS TO ALL OUR PARTNERS



POWERED BY OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

This event would not have been possible without the hard work of our dedicated volunteers. Pictured from l. to r.: Jabari Walker, Sustainability Manager, Bowie State University; Nicole Jackson, Sustainability Consultant, NAACP Maryland State Conference; Brittany Baker, Legislative Consultant; Anas Abdallah Askar, Ph.D., Lecturer, Bowie State University; and Staci Hartwell, Energy Advisor and Chair, NAACP Maryland State Conference, Environmental and Climate Justice Committee. Not pictured: Tekeya Peterson, Morgan State University, and Sandra Green, Coppin State University



OUR TEAM



Brittany Baker

Brittany Baker is a strategic communications professional with years of experience crafting written and visual content, supporting policy, and coordinating events to promote sustainability and environmental activism. She is exceptionally skilled in communicating scientific information in a persuasive manner for public audiences and coordinating events with educational objectives.

EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

POLICY ADVISOR

Maryland House of Delegates, Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

EVENT PLANNING CONSULTANT

World Bank/WRI, "Transforming Transportation" Annual Event

COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANT

New York Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resilience

EVENT PARTNER

POLITICO



Nicole Jackson

Nicole Jackson, an U.S. Army Reserve Veteran and Sustainability Professional with expertise in facilities and administrative management, project management and sustainable sourcing.

Nicole seeks opportunities where she may leverage her knowledge of green building principles, sustainability, project management and policy development to assist organizations in achieving strategic goals and optimizing their operations.

Through developing policies that directly affect reducing carbon footprint, waste management strategies, and sustainable procurement practices, Nicole works to promote better lives and drive organizations to improve sustainability performance.

Executing her expertise in the field of sustainability, Nicole has engaged with several organizations. Most recent are NAACP MSC Environmental & Climate Justice Committee, World Wildlife Fund, Inc., and U.S. Green Building Council.

Nicole is active in her community, as Vice-Chair of the Prince George's County Climate Task Force Resident Advisory Group and Chair of the sustainability committee for the incorporated City of District Heights.



Staci Hartwell

As an Energy Advisor and Business Development Manager, Staci Hartwell, has been integral in the installation of over 40MW of Solar. She gained her renewable energy expertise with energy giant Tesla. Her consulting firm's current clients are among national brands, including Home Depot, General Electric, and the DC Government.

As a volunteer, Staci has been instrumental in organizing the legislative strategy and policy for NAACP Maryland State Conference, Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) Committee. Since being appointed as the Chair of the ECJ Committee, Staci has also developed and managed major programs, including *Maryland Solar Equity Initiative/HBCU BIPOC Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Technologies* (HBCUBEST), *Climate Justice is Racial Justice* -- a community awareness and capacity building campaign, *HBCU Legislative Night*, and more.

Staci seeks challenges within the community and organizes human, financial, and material resources, aimed at empowering CBOs, to erode systemic climate and environmental racism to improve the quality of life for Marylanders.

This report was written and designed by [Lizzy Unger](#) and includes images from our event photographer, [Nicholls-Pierce & Company](#).

For inquiries on this event or report, please reach out to action@naacpmdecj.org or visit us at naacpmaryland.org

