



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Joins Amicus Brief to Hold Oil Companies Accountable for Costs of Climate Change

BALTIMORE, MD (January 3, 2020) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh, joining a coalition of 13 states, today filed an [amicus brief](#) supporting Rhode Island in its lawsuit *State of Rhode Island v. Shell Oil Products Co., et al.* In the lawsuit, the state seeks to hold oil companies accountable for their actions contributing to climate change and the resulting harms from sea-level rise, changes to the hydrologic cycle, and increased air and ocean temperatures.

“Climate science confirms that harmful pollution from Big Oil contributes to climate change and its devastating effect on our environment,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Maryland, like other states, should have the right to pursue these fossil fuel polluters under state law, even when the danger to the environment and public health is widespread.”

In its suit, Rhode Island alleges that the major fossil fuel producing companies knowingly contributed to climate change and failed to warn regulators and the public about the harms of fossil fuel use. Instead, these companies promoted pseudo-scientific theories and questioned legitimate climate science in order to confuse the public and maintain their profits. The complaint argues that oil companies should be liable for infrastructure-related damages resulting from their actions.

The case is currently pending in the First Circuit after the oil companies appealed a district court decision that the lawsuit belongs in the state court. In their brief, the coalition of attorneys general asserts that the district court decision should be affirmed. The coalition argues that:

- States play an important role in addressing climate change and protecting human welfare, including providing a forum to decide cases related to climate change;
- The Clean Air Act recognizes states’ roles in reducing air pollution and does not indicate that the federal courts should have exclusive jurisdiction over cases involving climate change; and
- The defendants’ appeal to transfer the plaintiffs’ claims to federal court, knowing that similar claims have been displaced by Congress, could unjustly deny plaintiffs a remedy for harm.

Joining Maryland in filing the brief are the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.