

Testimony before Council of the District of Columbia
Bill 20-481, Fossil Fuel Divestment Act of 2013
Jessica Church, Field Director of the Good Steward Campaign
November 26th, 2013

Good afternoon members of the Council of the District of Columbia. My name is Jessica Church and I am a resident of Ward 4 as well as the Field Director of the Good Steward Campaign. We are a movement of young Christians who believe that we are called to be Stewards and caretakers of God's Creation.

This fall, the Good Steward Campaign engaged with 30 college campuses ranging from American University right here in the district to Binghamton University in New York to Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta and even as far west as Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas. We sent speakers, offered resources, and led bible studies and discussions on the topics of faith, creation care, and fossil fuel divestment.

I stand here today on behalf of all the students, college chaplains, and campus ministers who, like me, are urging their communities to make decisions that line up our investments with our values. I also stand here as a proud resident of Ward 4 who wants all of DC to thrive, but sees particular vulnerabilities in my neighborhood.

As Christians, we invest our time and our talents in mission work, both domestically and overseas. We build up infrastructure in communities in the form of schools and wells. We help with housing and serve in soup kitchens to lift up those who have been pushed down. God has given us so many gifts – our bodies, our minds, and our hearts – with which to do great work.

And here in DC, you are also trying to do great work to build up our communities and local economies. But we shouldn't build up with one hand as we tear down with another. We need to make sure that our financial investments are also working toward building the type of city you all envision. And the simple fact is, investments in fossil fuels are not.

97% of scientists agree that the burning of fossil fuels leads to climate change; and climate change exacerbates circumstances that contribute to hunger and poverty. It creates weather conditions that increase the spread of many diseases and it makes it harder to grow crops. It also increases the frequency and force of extreme weather events like the typhoon that recently destroyed much of the Philippines and, in our own country, Superstorm Sandy.

We learned from Katrina and Sandy that when these storms hit, the poorest neighborhoods get hit the hardest and subsequently need the most financial assistance to get back on their feet. We want to make sure that our investments are ones that will help stave off extreme weather, rather than contribute to the problem; because these climate disruptions aren't going to stop. In fact, they're going to get worse.

So the problem with investing in fossil fuels is that it *undoes* the work God has called us to do. It creates suffering, rather than alleviating it. This is why removing the city's money from fossil fuels is the only moral option. Fossil fuel divestment is a **values-based act of commitment** to a healthy future for our city, especially for the least well off.

Today, the District of Columbia has the opportunity to lead on this issue of great importance, and I urge you to do the right thing and pass the Fossil Fuel Divestment Act of 2013. Thank you, Council, for allowing me to speak before you. It has been an honor.