



**Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS of HB 1033**  
Environment and Energy - Investment in Overburdened Communities  
Appropriations Committee  
Economic Matters Committee

Elizabeth Alex, On Behalf of CASA

March 15, 2022

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Economic Matters Committees,

CASA strongly supports HB 1033 - Environment and Energy - Investment in Overburdened Communities, and thanks the sponsor, Delegate Rosenberg, for introducing this important piece of legislation. CASA is the largest immigrant services and community organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 120,000 Black and brown immigrants and working families.

Historically, immigrants, working class communities, and people of color have borne disproportionate negative impacts from dirty energy use and climate change. HB1330 aims to begin to repair that harm by investing at least 40% of state funds allocated to key agency programs into Environmental Justice communities. With this important legislation, Maryland is taking an important step forward by defining those communities that have been most harmed using a series of scientific criteria and public health indicators and following the example of the federal Environmental Protection Agency by directing at least 40% of investment into these Environmental Justice communities. We recommend further strengthening this legislation by further clarifying the definition of Environmental Justice<sup>1</sup> and aligning the criteria for defining an overburdened community to align with those outlined in HB 880. While this list of criteria does not explicitly name race or English language ability as criteria for investment, the communities targeted by this set of indicators aligns with our principles of racial justice, with 68% of communities targeted by this bill being majority Black and Latinx census tracts, compared to Maryland's statewide population, in which 51% of the population is majority Black and Latinx, according to the 2020 US Census.

As we strive to achieve ambitious energy transition goals, it is critical that we take steps to repair generations of harm suffered by Environmental Justice communities, those who have been overburdened and underserved, as defined in the legislation. Black, Latino, Indigenous, and working class communities deserve investments in climate resiliency, public health, and energy transition infrastructure and programs. As we prepare to invest in significant infrastructure that will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restructure our energy systems, and rethink our

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<sup>1</sup> "The just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, or ability, with respect to the development, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation of laws, regulations, programs, policies, practices, and activities, that affect human health and the environment."

transportation systems, we must not forget the communities that have all too often been left behind in the name of progress. The process of transitioning to clean energy should go beyond harm mitigation towards active investment in repairing the harm done by generations of overreliance on fossil fuels. Thank you for your consideration of HB1033. For all the reasons stated above, we urge a favorable vote from the committees with the inclusion of these clarifying amendments.