



HB1200 – Environment – Permit Applications – Environmental Justice Screening

Testimony before

House Environment and Transportation Committee

March 04, 2022

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Virginia Smith, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB1200**, which would require someone applying for certain permits from the Department of the Environment to include the Environmental Justice Score from the Maryland EJScreen mapping tool within the application. It also requires the Department of Environment to conduct their own environmental justice analysis for the address where the applicant is seeking the permit, also using the Maryland EJScreen mapping tool. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Wells in sponsoring this important legislation.

There have been numerous studies demonstrating that people of color are disproportionately exposed to pollutants, such as particulates from automobile fumes, smog and construction dust. This exposure leads to serious health implications, including cancer, asthma, heart attacks, and premature death. It is far past time to consider the environmental justice impacts whenever a new bill is considered. This bill does just that by requiring an analysis of any permit request based on an EJ score.

The EJ Score evaluates multiple environmental and environmental justice indicators, including the pollution burden exposure, the pollution burden environmental effects, sensitive populations, and socioeconomic factors. By considering this score, the Maryland Department of Environment will not just be considering the impact the specific permit may have, but how all impacts in the area will combine to impact the address. The other benefit of this bill is that the EJScore will need to be included on public notices, so there will be transparency when a decision is made. Work is still needed because the bill does not currently indicate what scores are needed to ensure permits are distributed in an equitable matter, when it comes to environmental justice, but this bill builds a framework for that analysis.

For these reasons, we support HB1200.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

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