TESTIMONY FOR HB1033
Environment and Energy - Investment in Overburdened Communities

Bill Sponsor: Senator Rosenberg
Committee: Appropriations
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1033 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Public policy in Maryland has for decades been driven by support for business at the expense of the residents in the state, and has been particularly targeted against low-income residents and communities of color. It is they who have shouldered the burden of toxic fossil fuel infrastructure and lack of investment in public transportation. As we move to a cleaner, greener economy, it is imperative that we do a much better job of supporting the residents and communities who have already born a huge burden.

HB1033 is targeted to reverse the inequities that have been created by the poor public policies of the past: - it dedicates investment to overburdened and low-income communities, microtargeting state funds in emergency management, transportation, green infrastructure, energy efficiency, and more towards communities overburdened by pollution who have the least resources. HB1033 will bring funding to the most impacted communities, spurring investment, clean up, resiliency, and workforce development opportunities as the state builds to a cleaner, brighter future.

HB1033 directs at least 40% of spending on environmental and energy programs to overburdened and low-income communities, providing the needed remediation, rehabilitation, and workforce development. The bill applies to census tracts where the median income is less than 200% of the federal poverty index - or in 2022, a family of four making less than $55,500.

To develop the definitions and identify the census tracts eligible for this funding, HB1033 uses the leadership and expertise of the Center for Community Engagement, Environmental Justice, and Health at the University of Maryland School of Public Health, creators of the MD-EJScreen mapping tool, to identify which communities qualify for funding. And it creates a framework for communities to have a say in what counts as a community disproportionately burdened by pollution, making sure that dollars are getting to where they need to go for programs like:

- Energy efficiency and renewable energy installation
- Bus service and transportation spending
- Parks and conservation
- Infectious and chronic disease prevention and support
- Housing and community development
- Water quality and air quality

This environmental justice principle is key for facing the climate crisis in a way that builds a healthy future for communities that have been sacrificed in the past. Communities that qualify for increased funding in HB1033 cover 16% of the state population - microtargeting the communities most in need. And, because of past and present environmental racism, these communities are disproportionately overburdened - 68% of qualifying communities are majority communities of color.

This bill recognizes the inequities of the past and seeks to ensure that Maryland treats all residents with respect and supports all our communities as we invest in our future.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.