



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate C. T. Wilson, Chair  
Delegate Brian M. Crosby, Vice Chair  
Economic Matters Committee Members  
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus  
DATE: January 19th, 2023  
RE: HB0473 Environment - Ambient Air Monitoring - Particulate and Fine Particulate Matter

### **The MLLC supports HB0473 - Environment - Ambient Air Monitoring - Particulate and Fine Particulate Matter, 2023**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0473.

A study published by the NIH in 2016 found associations between exposures to particulate matter and reduced lung function in Latino and African American children with asthma from different geographical regions in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Ambient air pollution has been consistently linked to respiratory outcomes including risk of asthma, asthma-related hospitalizations, poor asthma control, overall lung function impairment, and reduced response to bronchodilator medications, with many of these associations observed in pediatric populations.<sup>2</sup> A recent study in Southern California communities found that long-term improvement in air quality was associated with positive effects on lung function growth in children.<sup>3</sup> These research findings are relevant to Maryland, a state which has the nation's second worst air pollution from cars, trucks and buses.<sup>4</sup> Marylanders who face the greatest exposure to transportation pollution are those who live near highways, along major freight corridors, and in urban areas, such as in Prince George's County<sup>5</sup> and Baltimore City<sup>6</sup>, where people of color make up a significant percent of the population.<sup>7</sup> In the cleanest areas of Maryland, in census tracts with average annual PM 2.5 concentrations less than half the state average, white residents make up 76% of the population,

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<sup>1</sup>Neophytou, A. M., White, M. J., Oh, S. S., Thakur, N., Galanter, J. M., Nishimura, K. K., Pino-Yanes, M., Torgerson, D. G., Gignoux, C. R., Eng, C., Nguyen, E. A., Hu, D., Mak, A. C., Kumar, R., Seibold, M. A., Davis, A., Farber, H. J., Meade, K., Avila, P. C., ... Burchard, E. G. (2016). Air Pollution and Lung Function in Minority Youth with Asthma in the Gala II (Genes-Environments and Admixture in Latino Americans) and Sage II (Study of African Americans, Asthma, Genes, and Environments) Studies. *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, 193(11), 1271-1280.  
<https://doi.org/10.1164/rccm.201508-1706oc>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Pinto de Moura, M. C. (2019, November 15). *Inequitable Exposure to Air Pollution from Vehicles in Maryland*. The Equation. Retrieved January 19, 2023, from <https://blog.ucsusa.org/cecilia-moura/air-pollution-from-vehicles-maryland/>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau *Quickfacts: Prince George's county, Maryland*. United States Census Bureau. (2020). Retrieved January 19, 2023, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/princegeorgescountymaryland/PST040221>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau *Quickfacts: Baltimore City (County), Maryland*. United State Census Bureau. (2021). Retrieved January 19, 2023, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/baltimorecitycountymaryland/HSG445221>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

while making up only 52% of the state's total population.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the most polluted census tracts have a higher proportion of people of color. Almost 15% of people in the highest burden areas – where concentrations are more than 1.5 times the state average – are Latinos, compared with a state population that is just 9% Latino.<sup>9</sup> Overall, people of color are over-represented in the more polluted areas, and under-represented in the less polluted areas.

Clean and breathable air is necessary for all Marylanders to thrive and survive. This bill would require the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health and local political subdivisions, to procure and deploy air quality monitors sufficient to monitor levels of PM 2.5 and PM 10 in census tracts where the average household income is less than 80% of Maryland's median household income. Then, beginning in 2026, the MDE must report the data from the deployed air quality monitors to the General Assembly as well as maintain a public facing website where individuals can get a live reading from the deployed air quality monitors. This website would also help the individual interpret the data, and educate them on steps they can take to prevent illness in the case of poor air quality. Lastly, this bill would establish the Maryland Legislative Air Quality Task Force to study and make recommendations on certain issues related to air quality monitoring in Maryland, such as how to utilize air quality monitoring data to mitigate toxic pollutants through regulatory action.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0473.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.