



**Testimony Supporting HB0473  
House Economic Matters Committee, House  
Environment & Transportation Committee  
February 13, 2023**

Position: **SUPPORT**

**Environment - Ambient Air Monitoring - Particulate and Fine Particulate Matter**

My name is Carlos Orbe. I am the Public Affairs Specialist for Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), an association housed at MD Nonprofits of over 300 Latino community leaders, business owners, and Latino-led nonprofits. MLU's mission is to unify efforts across the state to advocate and organize for the benefit of Maryland's Latino community. Our vision is that the Latino community in Maryland thrives, achieves excellence, innovates, and continually makes progress economically, socially, and environmentally. We utilize data-driven and evidence-based approaches to build coalitions to advocate and create a space for every Latino to have a voice. In doing so, we look to create or advocate for a network of resources to support Latino-initiatives that positively impact the community overall. For these reasons, I am writing to express my support for the Ambient Air Monitoring - Particulate and Fine Particulate Matter, HB0473, sponsored by Delegates Fraser-Hidalgo, Charkoudian, and Love, which will create extensive requirements on the Department of the Environment.

Established in 2020, MLU has become one of the most involved non-profit organizations within Maryland's Latino community. From its inception and as a civil right, MLU's members have embraced environmental health measures, including air quality, across the state as a principle for our minority communities at-risk. MLU believes that establishing statewide ambient air monitors is crucial for us to study the current health impacts that are plaguing our citizens. From the populations in industrial areas of Baltimore, to the CAFO-impacted communities of the Eastern Shore, identifying known sources of pollution, and using that data to better regulate permits within the state should be of utmost priority this legislative session. We are urging a favorable report with only one amendment: to change the recommended last possible start date before 1/1/2026. Maryland is facing a crucial time where we are under threat from fake green energy schemes that are going to be placed in our most vulnerable communities. Collecting this data will be crucial before any new major businesses can be permitted throughout the state.

There are indirect consequences that immediately put minority communities at risk that depend on clean air quality. Currently, MDE does not require CAFOs to obtain permits to emit ammonia, in any amount. Under the Emergency Planning and Right-to-Know Act ("EPCRA"), ammonia has been listed as an extremely hazardous substance (EHS) due to its toxicity and flammability: It can cause adverse human health effects including "irritation of the eyes, the skin, the mucous membranes, headaches, nausea, also possible eye damage." It poses a risk to worker safety and general human health. Ammonium particulates contribute to fine particulate matter (PM2.5). PM2.5 is a criteria pollutant under the federal Clean Air Act and contributes to an array of health issues.

Maryland Latinos Unidos stands with Delegates Fraser-Hidalgo, Charkoudian, and Love, in requiring the state to reestablish and strengthen its ambient air monitoring, communities can begin to breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that their health and well-being is of the utmost priority and the data collected will be publicly available. We request the committee to give a favorable report for HB 473.

**Respectfully,**  
**Carlos Orbe, Jr.**  
Public Affairs Specialist  
Maryland Latinos Unidos

*Carlos Orbe Jr.*