



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
Delegate Mark S. Chang, Vice Chair
Appropriations Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: 2/15/2024
RE: HB842 - Environmental Justice - Investment in Infrastructure
Construction Projects

The MLLC supports HB842 - Environmental Justice - Investment in Infrastructure Construction Projects, 2024

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 HB842.

Across the nation, Latinos disproportionately bear the impacts of climate change and, subsequently, face economic and health disparities.¹ For example, Latinos are 21% more likely than whites to live in urban heat islands, which can be up to 22 degrees Fahrenheit hotter.² Due to historical redlining practices, communities of color are disproportionately affected by hotter temperatures, are more vulnerable to flooding, and have higher levels of exposure to air pollution.³ President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act established the Justice40 initiative to address these disparities nationally, mandating 40% of specific federal investments to be allocated to communities impacted most by climate change.⁴ A 2019 study found that "Latino majority census tracts have installed 30 percent less rooftop solar than non-Latino majority census tracts."⁵ The Environmental Protection Agency had, as of March 2023, already made available \$100 million for projects that advance environmental justice in underserved and overburdened communities.⁶ Nationally, Latinos make up 27% of the construction labor force and are often exposed to environmental hazards and climate impacts. The federal initiative intends to create more opportunities in the clean energy sector for all workers, particularly communities of color.⁷

HB842 seeks to mitigate the disproportionate impact climate change has in communities of color as well as in low- to moderate-income households. In administering certain federal funds, this legislation will require a State agency to allocate a specific percentage of the funds to certain infrastructure

¹ [Coalition of Organizations Launch the Latino Climate Justice Framework Project](#)

² [Latino Communities and the Climate Crisis](#)

³ [New investment in climate action can be a game changer for Latinos](#)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

construction projects in underserved communities, communities of color, and communities with a high percentage of low- to moderate-income households. In administering federal funds, each State agency should allocate a minimum of 40% of funds to infrastructure construction projects in overburdened and underserved communities and an additional 40% of funds to infrastructure projects in communities of color and communities with high low- to moderate-income households.

These communities will be identified by the State agency in coordination with the Justice40 Committee established under Subsection (F) of this Act. The covered programs outlined in the Justice40 initiative include investments in affordable and sustainable housing, climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transportation, and clean water and wastewater infrastructure.

Infrastructure construction projects include the construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, modernization, alteration, repair, or improvement of buildings, structures, or property including in the sectors of transportation, water, energy, broadband, and natural resources.

Low- to moderate-income household refers to a household located in a census tract with an average median income at or below 80% of the average median income for the State. Funds administered by the State agency should avoid burdens to these communities, including physical or economic displacement, increased exposure to toxins, and other economic, environmental, or public health burdens.

The bill will restrict, under certain conditions, the allocation or use of certain federal funds for an infrastructure construction project that will cost in excess of a certain amount. Federal funds may be allocated or used to support infrastructure construction projects that will cost in excess of \$5,000,000 only if the construction work is performed in accordance with a project labor agreement that includes provisions to encourage apprenticeship training and the hiring of workers who reside in overburdened and underserved communities.

On or before December 1, 2024, and each December 1 thereafter, each State agency shall submit a report to the General Assembly in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article. On or before December 31, 2024, and each December 31 thereafter, the Justice40 Committee shall submit a report to the General Assembly in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB842.