



TESTIMONY FOR SB1086

Environment - Environmental Justice Districts - Designation and Requirements

Bill Sponsor: Senator Mary Washington

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB1086 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.

As a matter of public policy, the Department of the Environment should prioritize Environmental Justice Districts when they are distributing funding to mitigate pollution and other environmental hazards. In order to make this policy effective it is important for residents of Environmental Justice Districts to be able to engage in the process.

This bill, if enacted, would allow any resident of a local jurisdiction or an overburdened or underserved community to submit an application to the Department of the Environment to request designation of their local area as an Environmental Justice District. It also calls on the Department of the Environment to publish the process for making an application on their website by December 1, 2024, along with the criteria they will use in evaluating the request. Within 60 days of receiving an application, the Department will publish notice of a public hearing, which will allow other residents in that location to give their views. The Department will be required to consider the input from the public hearing before making a decision on the application.

A list of approved Environmental Justice Districts must be available by April 1, 2025 on the Department of Environment's website.

We approve of the way that this process encourages residents to get involved and to provide information to the Department of Environment that they would otherwise have difficulty acquiring. We believe that it will show that Maryland does care to support Environmental Justice Districts and their residents when trying to remediate the damage from pollution and other environmental hazards.

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