



Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)

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Testimony on HB517 –
HB517: Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights
Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA) supports HB517.

The Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Health & Justice proposes a constitutional amendment to the Maryland constitution that will enshrine the right to a healthy environment for all Marylanders.

Across Maryland, damaged environments threaten our communities. When pollution makes our neighbors sick, we have failed in our shared responsibility to “keep and tend the Garden,” as the biblical book of Genesis mandates.

All of our traditions teach that protecting Creation means protecting the life of our human neighbors, the well-being of our communities, and the health of our natural places. A damaged environment threatens all life by interfering with the rights of all people to drink pure water, breathe clean air, and live healthfully now and in the future. We are speaking out to explicitly protect the rights of all Marylanders to live in a life-giving environment.

As communities of faith, we support a Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Health & Justice because:

- **Clean air and water are blessings entrusted to us** – This amendment supports all other protections for health and the environment. By affirming a right to a healthy environment, we are expressing the calling of all our faiths to protect and steward our home places.
- **Ensuring healthy communities expresses our love for our neighbors** – This amendment would provide bedrock protections for individual rights and legally-recognizable standing so our neighbors can have access to courts when they are harmed by environmental injustice.
- **Ensuring a healthy environment expresses the calls of our faiths to promote a world in which future generations can live and flourish** – This amendment establishes the government of Maryland as a trustee of the state’s natural resources for the long term, asserting that the right to a healthy environment is on par with other fundamental rights protected in our constitution.

Maryland needs to take proactive steps to protect our communities and enable all of our neighbors to be able to defend their right to a healthy environment.

We urge the committee to give HB517 a favorable report.