

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Kumar Barve  
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
House Office Building, Room 251  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Opposition of House Bill 517 (Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights)**

Dear Chairman Barve:

The Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA), representing 100,000 employees of the building industry across the State of Maryland, opposes House Bill 517 (Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights).

This measure proposes an amendment to the Maryland Constitution establishing certain individual rights, including a right to a certain clean and healthy environment and the right to intervene in an action brought by the State or a political subdivision of the State. While we appreciate the intent and are supportive of measures to protect the environment we do not feel that the Constitution is the right mechanism for this.

This dramatic and unnecessary expansion of legal standing is an inefficient use of State resources and will significantly affect the land use and development process. The local planning process already offers extensive public input opportunities through various hearings, public input meetings, and open comment periods. Anyone concerned with the potential environmental impact of a land use decision has ample opportunities to voice those concerns. Expanding the ability of someone who is not aggrieved or can not show harm as a result of a land use decision is a redundant use of government resources and will result in costly unnecessary delays.

Moreover, participating in and defending against these lawsuits will disproportionately affect the small builders who make up the backbone of our industry.

For these reasons, MBIA respectfully requests the Committee give this measure an unfavorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information about this position, please contact Lori Graf at 410-800-7327 or [lgraf@marylandbuilders.org](mailto:lgraf@marylandbuilders.org).

cc: House Environment and Transportation Committee Members