

Rabbi Nina Beth Cardin  
Jones Falls Watershed  
Baltimore, MD

February 18, 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Support for House Bill 517 – Constitution Amendment – Environmental Rights**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

I am a rabbi, teacher, mother, grandmother, neighbor, resident of the Jones Falls Watershed – and I write to urge passage of HB 517.

When we bring our children into this world, we make a covenant with them: to love them, protect them, and to the best of our ability, assure that nothing harms them.

And yet here we are, destroying their world, depriving them of the natural glories and opportunities we knew, and forcing them to divert large parts of their preferred future to manage – even suffer through - what we have broken.

All the good laws that this committee passes are essential. But in truth, there is nothing underpinning them, nothing to secure them against the will of future administrations or overly influential corporate interests. And even with all the good that the legislature does, we cannot pass laws fast enough or precise enough to respond to the needs of this rapidly changing earth. Only a constitutional guarantee of our right to a healthy environment can do that. Even more, such an amendment changes the very nature of how we think. By recognizing a right to a healthy environment, we “transform environmental protection from an aim of government (among many competing aims), into an obligation.”<sup>1</sup>

For the sake of justice, of all who are suffering now, and all those who come after us, I urge you to support HB517.



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<sup>1</sup> R. Bratspies, “Do we need a human right to a healthy environment?” Santa Clara Journal of International Law 31 (2015)