



**Testimony in Support of HB 1133 –**  
Tree Planting – Urban Trees Program and Commission for the Innovation and Advancement of  
Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings  
(Del. Bridges)

**FAVORABLE**

February 25, 2021

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of Strong Future Maryland, we write in support of HB 1133. Strong Future Maryland works to advance bold, progressive policy changes to address systemic inequality and promote a sustainable, just and prosperous economic future for all Marylanders.

Across Baltimore, the hottest areas tend to be the poorest and that pattern is not unusual. In dozens of major U.S. cities, low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be hotter than their wealthier counterparts, according to a joint investigation by NPR and the University of Maryland's Howard Center for Investigative Journalism. Those exposed to that extra heat are often a city's most vulnerable: the poorest and disproportionately, people of color. According to a Howard Center analysis of U.S. census data and air temperature data obtained from Portland State University and the Science Museum of Virginia, the hottest neighborhoods in Baltimore can differ by as much as 10 degrees from the coolest.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), trees and other plants help cool the environment, making vegetation a simple and effective way to reduce urban heat islands. In addition, the EPA notes that trees and vegetation that directly shade buildings decrease demand for air conditioning, and trees and vegetation decrease the production of associated air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions reduce runoff and improve water quality by absorbing and filtering rainwater. And, the EPA notes, the benefits are almost always higher than the costs.

Notably, trees and vegetation also remove air pollutants. In Baltimore, a 20-year gap in life expectancy exists between the city's poor, largely African American neighborhoods and its wealthier, whiter areas. A baby born in Cheswolde, in Baltimore's far-northwest corner, can expect to live until age 87. Nine miles away in Clifton-Berea, near where *The Wire* was filmed,

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the life expectancy is 67, roughly the same as that of Rwanda, and 12 years shorter than the American average.

How much pollution you breathe in depends mainly on where you live and how close you are to things like highways or factories. That drives racial disparities, according to a 2019 study that compared consumption and housing patterns across different demographic groups.

In addition to the air quality and health benefits, planting billions of trees across the world is one of the biggest and cheapest ways of taking CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere to tackle the climate crisis, according to scientists. Earlier this year, researchers with the USDA Forest Service and Portland State University published their findings from modeling various scenarios to determine how carbon sequestration would increase if the agency increased its financial investment in tree planting and forest conservation programs. The research team found that afforestation and reforestation policies yielded the greatest return in carbon sequestration.

Maryland must do more for climate action — in the name of environmental justice, for the health of our communities, and for the future of our families. This committee can make a commitment to that work by issuing a favorable report on HB 1133.

*John B. King Jr.*  
*Founder and Board Chair*

*Alice Wilkerson*  
*Executive Director*