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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 674 – Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities – Reform

Educations, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 24, 2021

SUPPORT

Background: Senate Bill 674 (SB674) would reform the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities so that its membership and work reflects the diversity of the state. The bill mandates that new members of the commission receive a full orientation on environmental justice. The commission would also be required to hold at least one meeting each, in an urban and rural part of the state. The commission would be required to implement the use of data and advanced mapping tools in their reporting. Finally, the commission would be required to create a list of potential environmental justice projects based on input by adversely impacted communities. The projects would be undertaken by alleged violators of environmental protections.

Written Comments: Like nearly all aspects of life, the destructive impacts of the climate crisis disproportionately impact communities of color. The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities is one of the few means the state has for assessing these adverse impacts, and working to remedy them. But the reality is that this commission is not working to meet its full potential and is not reflective of the very communities it was established to protect. The climate crisis is the single greatest existential threat that humanity faces. Our state must be working to ensure that everyone is protected from it.

The Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* teaches us to repair the world in which we live in. Jewish law clearly states that we are not to destroy the public domain. The public domain is just that, it belongs to everyone, regardless of race or background, and any efforts to repair our world must be equitable.

The Baltimore Jewish Council and the The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore are committed to repairing our world. We represent The Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, MD, a conference center and farm that employs and teaches sustainable practices, many of which are called for in this bill. We encourage this committee to join us in our mission to create a cleaner Maryland that is healthier for everyone. With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of SB 674.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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