



## **HB1207/SB674 – “Environment - Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities – Reform”**

### **Testimony before House Environment & Transportation Committee**

**February 26, 2021**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB1207**, which will strengthen the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members).

Climate Solutions Now may be one of the most important legislative actions in the history of the state of Maryland. It places the state of Maryland at the forefront of addressing the Climate Crisis and helping to avert a global disaster. Environmental Justice is an essential part of the bill which addresses decades of neglect and misuse in underserved communities – and the associated endangerment of citizens health and economic well-being. ***HB 1207 ensures that these are not empty words on paper but thoroughly implemented changes and provisions.*** The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities must play a vigorous and determined role in rectifying the long overdue problems in vulnerable communities. **HB1207** empowers the Commission by mandating organizational requirements which serve the goal of fair and equal environmental rights. This includes changing the commission membership to reflect the diversity of affected communities in our state. By specifying membership to represent all aspect of the community – citizens, business, healthcare, environmental experts, local government representatives and others, not only is fairness served but a richness of expertise and life experience is brought to the table. Requiring meetings to be held in affected communities insures accessibility at the local level. The use of data sets and mapping tools to analyze current state laws and assess their effectiveness is essential. Finally, identifying potential projects to ensure Environmental Justice is bedrock. Coordination with the Commission on Climate Change insures thoroughness and effectiveness. Reporting findings on an annual basis enables ongoing, systematic progress and accountability.

**HB1207** provides the necessary tools and personnel to more deeply address Environmental Justice.

**Indivisible Howard County urges a favorable report on HB 1207.**

Barbara Matheson  
Columbia, Maryland