

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

CAMILLE BURKE, CHAIR



February 26, 2021

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: HB 1207 - Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities – Reform

Letter of Information:

The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) is committed to doing our part to ensure that environmental laws and programs protect the environment as well as the health and well-being of all Marylanders. CEJSC has reviewed House Bill 1207 and provides this letter of information.

CEJSC is charged with examining EJ issues and sustainable community opportunities that may be associated with public health, safety, economy, government, or other issues relating to EJ and sustainable communities. CEJSC is broadly tasked with reviewing and analyzing Maryland laws and policies pertaining to EJ issues, including state agency programs and permits. CEJSC is also tasked with developing criteria to identify vulnerable communities and prioritizing action strategies toward the identified areas of the state that need immediate attention.

CEJSC is established in statute with the following authority:

- (1) Advise State government agencies on environmental justice and related community issues;
- (2) Review and analyze the impact of current State laws and policies on the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities;
- (3) Assess the adequacy of State and local government laws to address the issue of environmental justice and sustainable communities;
- (4) Coordinate with the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council on recommendations related to environmental justice and sustainable communities;
- (5) Develop criteria to assess whether communities in the State may be experiencing environmental justice issues; and
- (6) Recommend options to the Governor for addressing issues, concerns, or problems related to environmental justice that surface after reviewing State laws and policies, including prioritizing areas of the State that need immediate attention.

It is important that the legislature understand that the CEJSC is comprised of volunteer members who are appointed from the general public. It is staffed by two state employees who have the Commission as but a part of their overall duties. CEJSC is concerned that adding detailed analyses and reports is beyond the scope of expertise afforded to the Commission. Any significant additional duties must be designated with adequate funding, staffing and/or contracting assistance so CEJSC can be responsive to any additional duties or responsibilities in a timely manner.

Thank you for your consideration. We will continue to monitor these issues. Please feel free to contact me at 443-984-2460 or by e-mail at Camille.Burke@baltimorecity.gov.

Sincerely,

Camille Burke

Camille Burke, Chair of the CEJSC

cc: The Honorable Tony Bridges, House of Delegates of Maryland
Ben Grumbles, Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment