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MAYOR

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HB 1207

February 26, 2021

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 1207 – Environment - Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities - Reform

POSITION: Support with Amendments

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with amendments** House Bill (HB) 1207.

HB 1207 would alter the membership of the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities. This bill would require the membership of the Commission to reflect the diversity of the State to the extent practicable, specify the term of certain members, and require the Department of the Environment (MDE) to provide a new member with an orientation to review environmental justice issues in the State. It would also alter the manner in which a chair is chosen for the Commission and require the Commission to meet at least six times per calendar year.

The Office of Equity and Environmental Justice, housed within the Baltimore City Department of Public Works, supports the goal of this bill and offers the below amendments to support the goal of equitable, informed and complete representation.

- 1) We recommend representation from those within the disability, the LBGTQ+, and faith based communities to expand the perspective of diversity on the Commission. Additionally, those appointed to represent ethnic and gender diversity should still have professional experience in environmental issues as well as lived experiences impacted by environmental inequities.
- 2) HB 1207 references “coordination” with the Children's Health Environmental Health Protection Advisory Council and we recommend that membership from this Council should be part of the Commission.

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- 3) With regard to the development of criteria to assess whether communities may be experiencing environment justice issues, consideration should be given to the existing federal assessment models and encouragement of a specific requirement to coordinate with the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council and assign participation to the reformed Commission.
- 4) Lastly, there are no references to MDE or the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, however, these two entities have responsibilities that inform and are relevant to the work of the Commission.
- 5) Finally, the terms of Commission member should be staggered to ensure continuity of membership and institutional knowledge.

House Bill 1207 is a great start toward supporting environmental and we believe these amendments will strengthen the intended goal of creating a more equitable Maryland for all residents.

Altogether, the BCA requests a **favorable with amendments** report on HB1207.