



MARYLAND
Chamber of Commerce

LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Letter of Information

Senate Bill 818

Environment – Permit Applications – Environmental Justice Screening

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Thursday, February 24, 2022

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 5,500 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic recovery and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

As introduced, SB 818 would require a person applying for a permit under the Maryland Environment Article to include an “EJ Score” from the “Maryland EJScreen” mapping tool to determine what, if any, environmental justice impacts may be present. The Maryland Chamber of Commerce is supportive of the intent of the legislation, however, as introduced the legislation presents some uncertainty.

It appears the intent of the legislation is for the Maryland Department of the Environment is to use the EJ Score as a factor in deciding whether to issue permits under the Environment Article. However, the language of the bill does not direct or even make reference to MDE using the EJ Score as criteria for approving or denying permits. Further, it is unclear to what extent and weight the EJ Score would hold in the overall approval process. Without clear direction on the purpose and role of the EJ Score in the permit application process we are concerned this could add a subjective measure to the permit review process causing further delays beyond the current norms.

The Maryland Chamber of Commerce appreciates your consideration of these comments and is happy to provide any additional information as needed.

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