

To: Maryland General Assembly, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Committee
From: Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie- Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality
Re: SB 0686 - Favorable with Amendments
Hearing Date: February 24, 2022

Dear Committee Members,

I write to you today, not as an activist, but as an affected homeowner, parent and member of the community. The legislation presented before you was a response to our request for Maryland Airport at 3900 Livingston Rd Indian Head, MD to be prevented from polluting our area with lead. My home literally shares a property line with the airport, so planes take off and land nearly in my backyard. The air traffic we received has increased exponentially, as the new private owner has apparently made some deals to route more aircraft to our area. However, the airport serves approximately 100 small piston planes which use avgas, which is a leaded fuel. Cars cannot even legally use leaded fuel! There have been “studies” done by the county that supposedly show that expanding this airport will not negatively impact the environment. The land surrounding the airport had previously been protected land and waterways under a “Watershed Conservation District” zoning code. The county commission overturned that in 2021 and zoned all of our surrounding land, homes, etc to Industrial zoning in order to approve the airport expansion. There were no studies done on how the two public schools, dozens of homes, and three churches are being affected by the lead that falls through the air and gets deposited into the soil and water that we consume. Our neighborhood and schools are 88% African American and mostly low SES, with most children on FARMS in school. It’s not lost on me that they feel our families’ health and safety is disposable. The Charles County Medical Association, Southern Maryland Fair Skies, the Mattawoman Watershed Society and others have joined the fight against this airport and its pollution. SB 686 is a jumping off point to stop the use of avgas at Maryland Airport and others, but it doesn’t go far enough to examine the human toll this is taking on our community. We are asking for a vote of “favorable with the following amendments”:

- 1) Require the Maryland Department of Health to study the levels of lead in residents who live, work, worship, or go to school near aviation businesses that use lead-based fuel;
- 2) Test surfaces and water supply both inside and outside buildings near such aviation businesses for lead particles;
- 3) Make findings public and easy to locate;
- 4) Create a recommendation plan on reversing, mitigating health problems of people infected with lead poisoning, and ending the spread of lead contamination.

Sincerely,



Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie