



Testimony - HB 880

Maryland Climate Equity Act

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon to the Chair and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony. My name is Djawa Hall and I am the Political Coordinator for 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Maryland/DC. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the United States, representing over 10,000 members here in Maryland and the District of Columbia who work in hospitals, Long-Term Care facilities, and Community-Based healthcare facilities throughout the region. Our union members support HB 880, the Maryland Climate Equity Act, and recommend the committee vote favorably for this bill.

When you talk about potential environmental threats to overburdened and underserved communities, we are at a crisis point in Maryland. There are disproportionate environmental and health impacts on Black and Brown communities in the state due to a combination of factors, but particularly stemming from a legacy of segregation and historically racist zoning codes. Communities experiencing environmental injustice have been subjected to systemic racial, social, and economic injustices, and are at a higher risk of intentional, unconscious, and structural discrimination, and disproportionate energy burdens.

Low-income Black communities in Maryland face greater cancer risks and exposure to air toxins, primarily due to highway pollution and other mobile sources of air pollution, such as airplanes, trains, lawnmowers, construction vehicles, and farm machinery.

State agencies currently do not consider the full breadth of impacts because of their decision-making. No state law requires agencies to meaningfully consider climate impacts, environmental justice/health impacts, and labor impacts resulting from their actions.

This bill would ensure the health and wellbeing of BIPOC communities are considered in the decision-making process of Maryland state agencies in a quantifiable way, engaging them in meaningful communications and protecting them from unintended consequences.

Workers also deserve a just transition to a pollution-free economy- which is necessary to ensure that they have access to the resources and benefits of a sustainable future. If the Climate Equity Act were already in place, it could deter the concentration of power plants in Prince George's County, the concentration of industrial facilities and waste incinerators in South Baltimore, the concentration of industrial agricultural operations on Maryland's eastern shore, and the transition of several coal-fired power plants to oil-fired power plants in overburdened communities across Maryland where our members live, work and play.

1199SEIU respectfully urges this committee to demonstrate its commitment to Environmental Equity in Maryland by issuing a **favorable vote** with **NO weakening amendments** on HB 880.

Respectfully,

Djawa Hall
Political Coordinator
1199SEIU UHE MD/DC