



TESTIMONY TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

HB0596: Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights

POSITION: Support

By: Nancy Soreng - LWVMD President

Date: February 23, 2022

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports **House Bill 596**, which would affirm the constitutional right of each Marylander to benefit from a healthy, sustainable environment.

It's no secret that our climate is changing at an alarming rate, impacting not only ecosystems, but the economy and human health. The environment around us has substantial effects on our daily lives, both direct and indirect. It is vital that the state protects the integrity of Maryland's ecosystems so that all residents and visitors can experience the natural beauty of our great state, free from the burdensome externalities that come with environmental degradation.

Environmental Justice is a major concern in the state of Maryland, as low-income and predominantly BIPOC communities in industrial Baltimore or struggling Bay ecosystems feel the brunt of the negative effects. **House Bill 596** would explicitly assert that every Marylander has an equal right to clean air, clean water, and an otherwise healthy environment, regardless of racial or socio-economic status.

Pollution is oftentimes untraceable, and its consequences are cross-boundary and long-lasting. It is imperative that the state assumes responsibility for Maryland's critical natural resources, like the economic hub of the Chesapeake Bay, so that our environment can be preserved and protected for current and future generations. In protecting our natural resources, the health and wellness of Maryland's citizens will be strengthened as well, allowing individuals the opportunity to prosper in all aspects of life. Nothing is more fundamentally important than the right to live in a safe, healthy environment, and **House Bill 596** wholeheartedly embraces this truth.

The League with over 1500+ members urge a favorable report.