

Written testimony FAVORABLE HB596

Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Human Rights to Sustainable and Healthy Environment

Hearing: February 23, 2022, Environment & Transportation

FAVORABLE

Laurel Peltier, Baltimore County citizen,

I am strongly in support of this powerful and strategic bill that would allow this Constitutional amendment to be added on to future ballot referendums.

Since the Industrial Revolution began with the discovery of coal in Wales, I would submit that governments and many elected officials have not put our environmental ecosystem's sustainability and its importance as the life sustaining system, at the forefront, or often in any way, of critical decisions made with our shared natural resources.

It seems odd in a way to have to legislate a bill that must be passed to be included on a ballot agreeing that our environment is a human right. It's not only a right, but also a necessity for survival. Clean air, clean water, clean natural habitats, all are vital for our species to survive. And we've done a suboptimal job of taking care of the Garden of Eden, a closed ecosystem. We're getting closer to a tipping point where our climate will become so polluted that scientists suggest we'll be in a new geological epoch. All because of decisions made where we did not consider our inalienable human environmental rights.

Governments, agencies, and elected officials in concert with for-profit businesses have made grave decisions about our environmental resources and have caused grave harm to our

planet's health -- our collective climate, our water sources and health, our soils, and the cities and communities we live in.

This bill would allow everyday citizens and groups to have a small weight in their favor against the usual well-capitalized corporations and entities that have to date, in my view, looked at our natural shared resources as a free resource to dominate with no care for the negative external costs that get paid by others. Over-development, continued reliance on fossil fuels, businesses that freely pollute air and water and surrounding communities, it's gotten us to this point.

This bill would also make it official that Maryland values the beautiful ecosystem we've been given, that we've taken horrendous care of, and that we honor and cherish and value its importance in all future decision our state governments make.