

**February 19, 2022**  
**HB 596**  
**Environment Transportation Committee**  
**Position: Favorable**

Environment and Transportation Committee Members,

**I am formally submitting this written testimony in favor of HB 596 to codify the human right to live and breathe in a healthful and stable environment into the Maryland Constitution.**

**Everyone has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment with access to clean air, water, land, and a stable climate, and the peace of mind that this right is protected legally.** If added to the Declaration of Rights section in the Maryland State Constitution, this glaringly essential right will be recognized as morally proportional to civil rights such as freedom of speech and peaceful assembly. The right would be self-executing, and as such, would enable individuals to sue the state and be heard in court if this sacred right is violated. In this way, protection of the environment would be of utmost importance and priority to the state government.

**There is precedent and proof that constitutional amendments legally guarding the right to a healthy environment strengthen both the state and local governments' ability to do so.** Compared to other environmental policy, states with environmental rights amendments in their constitutions— including New York, Pennsylvania, Montana, and Hawaii among others— have most successfully upheld their state and municipal governments' right to both protect natural resources and make land use decisions in their jurisdictions.

**BIPOC and low income communities suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation.** These marginalized communities are subject to greater concentrations of pollution and environmental harm— especially that of air. As a result of exposure to pollutants, members of communities such as these experience serious medical and health consequences, like asthma in children. If passed into law in the state constitution, the Maryland state government would be obligated to remedy these urgent public health disparities and protect its BIPOC communities from further health damage. Enough said.

Thank you for your time and consideration in supporting this measure.

Respectfully,

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