



Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS of HB880
Environment - Impact of Actions on Climate, Labor and Environmental Justice
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Economic Matters Committee

Elizabeth Alex, On Behalf of CASA

March 2, 2022

Dear Members of the Environment & Transportation and Economic Matters Committees,

CASA strongly supports **HB880- Impact of Actions on Climate, Labor, and Environmental Justice**, and thanks the sponsor, Delegate Boyce, for introducing this important piece of legislation. CASA is the largest immigrant services and advocacy organization in Maryland, and in the Mid-Atlantic region, with a membership of over 120,000 Black and brown immigrants and working families.

Historically, immigrants, working class communities, and people of color have borne disproportionate negative impacts from dirty energy use and climate change. HB880 aims to prevent further harm to these Environmental Justice communities, both direct environmental harm as well as economic harm resulting from underpayment or lack of adequate benefits, by requiring governmental units to assess the potential for harm prior to approving new projects. We recommend further strengthening this legislation by naming displacement as an additional economic harm to be prevented in section 1-904(B)(3).

As we strive to achieve ambitious energy transition goals, it is critical that Environmental Justice communities, those who have been overburdened and underserved, as defined in the legislation, do not endure further harm as an unintended consequence of transitioning to clean energy. Black, Latino, Indigenous, and working class communities deserve investments in energy transition infrastructure that won't result in displacement, increase in air or water pollution, abusive employers, or any other negative health or economic impacts.

The Climate Labor Equity Test is a crucial piece of legislation which provides a roadmap for both prevention of harm and future investments in those communities that have suffered the most harm from climate change. As we prepare to invest in significant infrastructure that will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, restructure our energy systems, and rethink our transportation systems, we must not forget the communities that have all too often been left behind in the name of progress. Clean, affordable energy is not only a luxury for some of us, it's a necessity for all of us. And the process of transitioning to clean energy should at a minimum do no harm to our most vulnerable communities.

Thank you for your consideration of HB880. For all the reasons stated above, we urge a favorable vote from the committee with the inclusion of this minor amendment.