

Environment and Transportation Committee

HB596/SB783: Constitutional Amendment: Environmental Rights

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: 2.23.22

Mr Chairman, Mr Vice Chairman, Honorable members of the committee,

I am the Rev. Dr. Robert E, Walker, Jr., a pastor of Monrovia Charge in the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist church, and Co-Chair of BRIDGE Maryland Inc. BRIDGE uses intentional relationship building, organizing and intensive leadership development in order to strengthen congregations and faith leaders to demonstrate and advance justice in the world.

I am also a former Watershed Stewart in Anne Arundel County.

I am here to ask you to support and vote for HB596 and to get your colleagues in the Senate to support and vote SB783. For those of you who believe in God and read the Bible you know that God has given humankind the responsibility of taking care of God's creation, this marvelous gift from the Creator we call earth so that generations upon generations will have a beautiful place to live, have their families without the worry of global warming, polluted waters, polluted air, bigger storms, droughts all the things that we are experiencing today.

As a watershed steward we were taught the importance of taking care of the water ways of Maryland. I love to fish and I am hesitant to eat fish from our rivers and tributaries of Maryland. The oysters and clams that purify the waters are dying because of the run-off of the pollution from fertilizers and run off from roofs and roads.

These two bills will

- create an enforceable right to a healthful environment
- strengthen state and local governments' ability to protect natural resources

- Strengthen the passage and enforcement of environmental laws
- Promote stronger environmental regulations
- Close the gaps in environmental laws
- Act as a guardrail to prevent the most egregious forms of harm

There are too many places in Black neighborhoods in Maryland that are harming the residents of their communities, trash dumps, incinerators, power plants that cause health problems for the community.

Environmental rights are human rights and we ask you to support HB596 that will amend the Maryland state constitution to protect the right to a healthy environment.

Thank you for your time. We are counting on you to do the right thing.

Rev. Dr. Robert Early Walker, Jr.