

February 20th, 2022
House Bill 596
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Favorable

Environment and Transportation Committee Members,

I am formally submitting this written testimony in favor of HB 596 to require a constitutional amendment which would protect our fundamental and inalienable right to a healthy environment with access to clean air, water, land, and a stable climate.

Residents of Maryland undeniably deserve to have their rights to a clean and healthy environment protected. **This right was meant to be established under the Maryland Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) which Maryland's General Assembly passed in 1973. However, the act's principle which states every Marylander has the "fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment" has yet to be truly enforced.** A constitutional amendment such as HB 596 aims to ensure that Maryland obtains and maintains a healthy environment. Legal protection of our rights to a clean environment is the only way we can be secure in our safety.

I believe that Maryland's state and local governments want Maryland's environment to be as healthy, clean, and beautiful as possible, and passing HB596 would strengthen their ability to protect it. As a coastal state, the well-being of our estuaries, marshes, bays, and other bodies of water are incredibly important. Our state is also very geographically diverse, with both very rural and very urban areas. The natural spaces need to be protected equally in both - particularly in more urban Maryland communities that have been consistently underserved when it comes to environmental protection. **All of these issues affect the health of Maryland's environment and therefore its citizens, but a constitutional right to protect our environment would allow the state and local governments of Maryland to band together and act on the same set of regulations that would keep us safe.**

I am not the only Maryland resident who believes in the importance of this constitutional amendment. **A recent poll indicated that approximately 76% of Maryland's registered voters favor protecting individual rights to a healthful environment in Maryland's state constitution.** There's no time to wait - Maryland residents are eager to pass this amendment and ensure that their rights to clean water, air, and land are protected not only now, but for future generations.

Maryland is known for its rich history. We should let a constitutionally protected environment be a part of this state's legacy too.

Respectfully,

Sarah Grzyb

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