



February 21, 2022

**Dear Chairman Barve, Delegate Stein, and Delegates of the Environment and Transportation Committee,**

We, the undersigned civic leaders across Maryland, urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass HB596, the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights.

The amendment would ensure that (1) each person, as a matter of human dignity, has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful and sustainable environment, and (2) the state, as the trustee of Maryland's natural resources, including its air, water, lands, wildlife, and ecosystems, shall preserve them for the benefit of current and future generations.

The state of Maryland recognized that "each person has the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment," when it passed the Maryland Environmental Policy Act of 1973. Unfortunately, the Act has not been sufficiently effective.

By elevating the right to a healthful environment to the same level as such fundamental rights as freedoms of the press, religion, and speech, the Amendment will provide constitutionally based protections in addition to those set forth in existing environmental laws and regulations. The Amendment also makes explicit the State's trustee role as a steward of our environment and the constitutional obligation to protect this right.

These principles will strengthen the basis for addressing the cumulative effects of legacy pollution that disproportionately impact many of our minority and low-income communities, and will steer Maryland toward true sustainability. They will provide a solid foundation for improved laws, regulations and programs at all levels of government, and the additional scrutiny that comes from constitutional provisions will serve as a guardrail against the most egregious forms of harmful action, protecting all Marylanders, now and in future generations.

Similar amendments have been constructive and responsible contributors to the environmental and governmental frameworks of other states (Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) that have adopted them. New York State adopted its version of the amendment in November 2021, with 68.9 percent of voters approving it.

We ask that you support and pass HB596, the proposed Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights in 2022. Our communities, especially those that are marginalized, our children, our grandchildren, and future generations need us to act now.

**Maryland Civic and Community Leaders**

The Honorable Jud Ashman, Mayor of Gaithersburg



The Honorable Bennard Cann, Mayor of Morningside

The Honorable Jacob Day, Mayor of Salisbury

The Honorable Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor of Somerset

The Honorable Kate Stewart, Mayor of Takoma Park

The Honorable Noah Waters, Mayor of Eagle Harbor

The Honorable Patrick Wojahn, Mayor of College Park

Councilman Mark Conway, Baltimore City Council, District 4

Councilman Jack Heath, President of Salisbury City Council

Councilman Izzy Patoka, Baltimore County Council

Councilmember Danny Schaible, Hyattsville City Council

Councilmember Jimmy Tarlau, Mount Rainier

The City of Salisbury Sustainability Advisory Committee

Adrian Boafo, Mayor Pro Tem, Bowie

Nina Forsythe, Commissioner of Water, Parks, and Recreation, City of Frostburg

Chloe Malouf, Vice Chairperson, City of Gaithersburg's Environmental Affairs Committee

President Terrence Sawyer, Loyola University Maryland

Barry Hill, Adjunct Professor of Law, Vermont Law School/MDEHR Advisor

Patricia Pittman, Fitzhugh Mullan Professor, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Wash. University

Darian Unger, Professor, Howard University

Dr. Sacoby Miguel Wilson, Associate Professor, UMD School of Public Health

Thomas Croghan, MD, Winemaker - The Vineyards of Dodon, Vice President - Future Harvest

Nicholas John Davenport, Social Worker

Nicholas DiPasquale, Director, Chesapeake Bay Program Office (retired)



Gwen DuBois, MD, MPH, President, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Andy Ellis, Vice President, Waltherson Improvement Association

Rob Etgen, Founding President, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (retired)

Terrence Fitzgerald, MD, Treasurer, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Willie Flowers, President, NAACP Maryland State Conference

Wayne Gilchrest, former U.S. Congressman, Maryland District 1 (retired)

Brooke Harper, Environmental Advocate

Staci Hartwell, Chair Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, NAACP Maryland State Conference

Rosa Hance, Chair, Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club

Rachel M. Hopp, Former Federal Environmental Program Manager and Enforcement Attorney/MDEHR Advisor

Steven W. Jones, Board President, Future Harvest

Bob Kambic, Visiting Scientist

Matthew Littleton, Environmental Lawyer/MDEHR Advisor

The Rev Richard D. Meadows Jr., Rector, The Historic St. James Episcopal Church

Arthur Milholland, Physician

Vernice Miller-Travis, Executive Vice President, Metropolitan Group

Ava Annette Richardson, PGC NAACP Liaison

Viriginia Rodino, APALA Maryland Chapter President

Martin Siegel, Environmental Lawyer/MDEHR Advisor

Dorothy Valakos, Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional

Rev. David James Ware, The Church of the Redeemer, Baltimore

Rabbi Stuart Weinblatt