



February 21, 2022

Testimony Supporting HB596

Dear members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee,

This letter is in support of HB596, Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights. Baltimore Beyond Plastic is a youth-led, action-oriented organization dedicated to merging public health, environmental advocacy, and legislation to change the world. We are a team of Baltimore City Public School students representing four different city schools, and have grown up experiencing the lack of environmental awareness and action first-hand. Students in Baltimore are not been given the information we need to understand the environmental challenges we're facing, much less to address them. Many students struggle with a lack of knowledge about our environment and what's happening around us, we have had to go out of our way to gain this information and understand what it would take to live in an environmentally healthy way and have an environmentally healthy society.

Title 26 of the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) lists numerous restrictions and regulations regarding environmental well-being in Maryland. However, what Title 26, nor any Maryland law, does not include is a person's fundamental right to a healthy environment. Bill HB596 would create a human rights amendment in the state Bill of Rights which would entitle all Marylanders to the essential aspects of a healthy environment, such as clean air and water. Furthermore, Bill HB596 would assist the fight against environmental injustice affecting low-income communities, an issue that our organization sees from a close perspective in Baltimore City. The amendment would give communities impacted by environmental pollution the legal grounds to confront the organizations and corporations responsible.

Multiple members of our group have read *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* by David Wallace-Wells, which details twelve different ways that it would be easy to feel hopeless looking at these potential futures, but rather than giving up we need to use this knowledge to jumpstart the fight against climate change. We are hoping that the Environmental Human Rights Amendment can move us forward in that fight. Please support this important bill!

Thank you for your time,
Baltimore Beyond Plastic
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