

Testimony in favor of HB0596  
Beri Kravitz  
Rockville, MD

Environmental degradation and pollution are profoundly affecting our State, and there are sectors of our community that are under greater stress due to industry, traffic, noise, poor water quality, air pollution, and lack of green spaces. These are typically areas of socio-economic stress as well. This legislation can offer guardrails against discriminatory environmentally damaging practices. Ultimately it can protect all Maryland residents. It is something I support to leave as a legacy to my children and it would be an outstanding legacy for our lawmakers to leave for all Maryland residents and an example of our strong leadership in the region. This legislation, if enacted now while we enjoy broad support for environmental protection, can protect our communities in the future when we possibly have less environment-friendly legislators or other priorities overshadowing our desire to support sustainable practices.

Several other states—namely Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Montana, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island—have adopted similar amendments. New York voters approved its version of the amendment in November 2021, with nearly 69 percent voting in favor.

The Amendment has support in Maryland from a wide set of racial and social equity, environmental, public health, and faith organizations, including the NAACP, League of Women Voters, League of Conservation Voters, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Maryland Public Health Association.

This amendment would require a balancing of economic and environmental needs - always remembering that economic development cannot take place at the expense of an unreasonable degradation of the Environment. It is a signal to developers and businesses that when they incorporate sustainable practices, they will attract customers who prioritize such practices and they will be welcome in our communities.