



LEGISLATIVE POSITION:

Unfavorable

House Bill 596

Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Dear Chairman Wilson and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 5,500 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic health and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

HB 596 proposes an amendment to the Constitution of Maryland to establish an inalienable right to a healthful and sustainable environment. Maryland businesses take seriously their role and impact in ensuring a sustainable future. Evident in the many greenhouse gas reduction and sustainability plans now common among private industry. However, many of the concerns from last years legislation remain in HB 596.

HB 596 stands to dramatically expand legal standing for environmental related suits despite the private right of action being removed compared to last years legislation. This increase in legal standing would impact almost every facet of modern building operations from land use and development, manufacturing, product development, the transportation of goods, etc. Without a definition to what constitutes a “healthful and sustainable environment,” which would vary greatly on individual preference and circumstance, HB 596 lacks any kind of standard upon which to measure. Without a standard to measure against individuals are free to allege a violation of their constitutional right against almost anything. Further, Maryland’s environmental laws, like all state and federal environmental statutes and regulations, currently protect our State’s natural resources.

The Maryland business community will continue to support a healthful and sustainable environment and we will continue to work alongside State and federal agencies to enforce and adopt laws and regulations that help Maryland secure a better future for everyone. However, HB 596 is not that avenue as it provides individuals a right to bring suit for almost any reason they see fit. As such, The Maryland Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests an **unfavorable report** on **HB 596**.