



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

February 28, 2022

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

Greetings. On behalf of the NAACP Maryland State Conference, I am writing to request a favorable report of House Bill 880.

Maryland's public agencies take a sweeping array of actions that affect residents and communities but do not meaningfully assess how their decisions may contribute to environmental injustice, climate change, and worker or labor impacts. Historically, state actions have contributed to public health disparities for BIPOC, low-income, and limited English proficient communities. These communities are disproportionately burdened by environmental hazards that include exposure to polluted air, waterways, and landscapes with extenuating negative impacts. These hazards ripple through the community creating cascading disparities in health, wealth, and even life expectancy.

The lack of consideration given to underserved and overburdened communities in Maryland has led to:

- low-income African American communities facing [greater cancer risks and exposure to air toxics](#), primarily due to highway pollution and other mobile sources of air pollution (i.e. airplanes, trains, lawnmowers, construction vehicles, and farm machinery),
- the [concentration of power plants](#) near African American communities in Prince George's County, Maryland, and
- the greater [prevalence](#) of underground storage tanks leaking toxic substances in low-income communities of color, among other negative outcomes.

While there are many factors contributing to health risks and outcomes, African Americans in Maryland are [more likely](#) to die from heart disease, cancer, and stroke. African-American Marylanders are also [1.1 times more likely](#) to suffer from asthma, and 2.3 times more likely to die from asthma, compared to white people. Disproportionate pollution burdens play a large role in leading to these health consequences and a lack of meaningful assessment, community engagement, and consideration in state decision-making has contributed to this problem.

Communities experiencing such environmental injustices have also been subjected to systemic racial, social, and economic injustices and face a disproportionate burden of adverse human health or environmental effects, a higher risk of intentional, unconscious, and structural discrimination, and disproportionate energy burdens. These communities have been made more vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to a combination of factors, particularly the legacy of segregation and historically racist zoning codes, and often have the least resources to respond, making it a necessity for underserved and overburdened communities to be meaningfully engaged as partners and stakeholders in government decision making as Maryland builds its climate resilience.

A fair and just transition to a pollution-free economy is necessary to ensure that workers, underserved, and overburdened communities have access to the resources and benefits of a sustainable future. House Bill 880 will ensure that members of those communities are meaningfully involved in government decision-making moving forward, requiring a higher level of engagement, review, and consent to ensure that overburdened and underserved communities are not forced to bear disproportionate environmental, climate, wealth, and health impacts moving forward.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 880.

Respectfully submitted,

[/s/ S R Hartwell](#)

Staci Hartwell, Chair
Environmental and Climate Justice
NAACP Maryland State Conference
617 257 8893