



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE
SB 783 – Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights
POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**By: Betsy Singer and Laura Salganik, Co-Chairs
Date: March 9, 2022**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Howard County supports SB 783/HB 596, the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights 2022.

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, will 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.

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. They will provide a solid foundation for improved laws, regulations, and programs at all levels of government. 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 that have adopted them: Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island and New York State. In fact, New York adopted its version of the amendment in November 2021, with 68.9 percent of voters approving it.

We ask that you support 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.