



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**SB 783
Support**

**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Wednesday March 9, 2022
SB 783 Constitutional Amendment—Environmental Rights
City Contact:**

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of this bill.

This bill would place on the November ballot an environmental human rights amendment to our State's constitution, giving each Marylander the right to a healthful and sustainable environment, no matter their background, income, color, or place of residence, and affirming that the State is trustee of our collective natural resources for future generations.

These principles ring true for residents of our City, a small community of nearly 18,000 next to Washington DC, half renters and half homeowners, with a wide range of family incomes, and over half people of color. Our diverse population and our location next to a major US city bring home, literally, the importance of an equal right to a healthful and sustainable environment for each one of us. State and regional data document that statewide, not just in Takoma Park, it is our residents of color and of lower income who bear the brunt of pollution, environmental degradation, and impacts of a changing climate, through health disparities and economic impacts.

This constitutional amendment would also provide a firm foundation for three of our City priorities—climate change and sustainability, racial equity, and healthful housing—that together capture what's important to our residents and those of communities like ours across the state. Our City declared a climate emergency in 2019, and in 2020 committed to aggressive measures to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. Our comprehensive housing and economic development plan prioritizes protecting local affordable housing to improve the health of all our residents. Our tree protection ordinance will help ensure a thriving and extensive tree canopy for future generations. Our City has been a leading Sustainable Maryland certified community since the program's start, and our City sustainability policies encourage, and in some cases require, individual action. And our 2017 racial equity policy commits us to view City policy and budget decisions through a racial lens, which includes working to reduce disparate health and environmental impacts.

For these reasons—the critical importance of a sustainable environment for all of our residents, addressing and slowing the impacts of climate change, and ensuring a quality environment for future generations--our City supports allowing Marylanders the opportunity to weigh in on this critical issue.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports SB 783, and encourages a favorable vote.