



SB0783 – Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights

**Testimony before
Judicial Proceedings
March 9, 2022
Position: Favorable**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of SB0783**. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the unified statement of the many sponsors of this bill.

At the core of American democracy are the principles that all persons have a natural right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the enjoyments of the rewards of their own industry; that all persons are equal and entitled to equal rights, opportunities, and protections under the law; and that all persons have corresponding obligations to the people and to the State. The global climate crisis requires that issues relating to the protection of the environment can not be ignored and are fundamental to the well-being of all peoples of the earth and to their right to the above principles. More than 100 international governments have adopted environmental amendments.

SB0783 – Constitution Amendment - would add two provisions in the Declaration of Rights section of the Maryland State Constitution: (a) that each person has the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful and sustainable environment, and said right shall not be infringed, and (b) that the State, as trustee, shall protect, conserve, and enhance Maryland's natural resources, including its air, lands, waters, wildlife, and ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations.

The rights of all people and future generations to clean water and air, and a healthful environment needs to be at the foundation of all good government action. As such, the state's natural resources are held *in trust* by the government *for the people*.

Furthermore, a recent poll found that 76 percent of Marylanders are asking for such enshrined protections. The passage of SB 0783 provides opportunity for the citizens of Maryland to decide if environmental human rights are an inalienable right and should be added to the constitution.

We respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB0783.

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