



NAACP

Maryland

STATE CONFERENCE

Legislation | SB 783 Maryland Environmental Human Rights Amendment
Committee | Judicial Proceedings
Position | Favorable

March 8, 2022

Testimony
Presented in Person

Greetings. I am the Chair of Environmental and Climate Justice for the NAACP Maryland State Conference. I am a native Washingtonian and 2nd generation resident of Prince George's County, one of the most environmentally overburdened and polluted counties in the state.

Unfortunately, across the country, race is still the number one indicator of where toxic and polluting facilities are located. Pollution and other environmental hazards are concentrated in communities of color, regardless of economic status. Maryland, unfortunately, is no exception. We cannot continue to undermine these communities and still expect them to thrive. This legislation serves as an "equalizer. It empowers organizations with the leverage they need to help make fair and equitable decisions concerning the environment.

Accountability is a tool of a civilized society. The State is supposed to protect, preserve, and enhance our natural resources and therefore, they are to be held responsible to ensure our well-being, as stewards of these natural resources; not for the interests of corporations, shareholders, but for us --"we, the people." Corporations are not people.

The 1960s exposed and elevated the lack of environmental protections and public health dangers to communities of color and those without political influence. And one-half century later, we are worse off due to cumulative environmental impacts. And even though the Declaration of Independence declares we have certain inalienable rights, there are too many instances in this state clearly demonstrating our government's failure to ensure those rights. This amendment is an opportunity to restore those protections and clearly demonstrate our constitution is for the people, by the people, so we will not perish from this earth.

Senator Smith, we regard you as a champion for the people and are grateful for your leadership on this important legislation. We encourage a favorable report. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ SRHartwell

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