



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Testimony on Maryland SENATE Bill SB0783: Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights

TO: Senator Smith, Chair, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Todd Larsen, Progressive Maryland Member
DATE: March 9th, 2021
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on **SB0783**. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots, nonprofit organization with 9 chapters from Frederick to the Lower Shore and more than 100,000 members and supporters who live in nearly every legislative district in the state. In addition, there are dozens of affiliated community, faith, and labor organizations across the state that stand behind our work. Our mission is to improve the lives of working families in Maryland. Please note our strong support for this bill.

I am reaching out to urge you to support the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights. This constitutional amendment would guarantee MD residents' right to a healthy environment - which is essential to maintaining residents' physical wellbeing, protecting the jobs of all Marylanders who rely on our waterways, ensuring the resilience of our food system, and uplifting Maryland's tourism industry.

Guaranteeing the right to a healthy environment will provide our private citizens with protections against the actions of corporations and companies who put profits ahead of protecting human health and following regulations. We cannot allow business leaders' threats to take their business elsewhere and the fear of change to push us to choose "business as usual" over our environment. We all need and have a right to clean air and water, but increasingly, these basic human needs are at risk, and particularly in communities of color and poor communities. Without a healthy planet, we cannot have a healthy populace.

All too often, short-term economic concerns are prioritized by elected officials and those short-term concerns create cascading, adverse impacts on the health, livelihoods, and overall well-being of the people. It is time to make fundamental changes to address the systemic problems contributing to the degradation of our environment.

Voting in support of the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights will give generations of Marylanders the right to live in a healthful environment. It will also create a solid legal basis to review and revise our existing environmental legislative authorities to better



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protect our environment, economy, and public health. The amendment will also lay the groundwork for our state to address deep inequities related to environmental racism, health disparities, and economic injustice.

Six states already have environmental rights in their constitutions - it is time for Maryland to join them and give the State the legal authority to serve as a protector of Maryland's natural resources.

The past couple of years have underscored the ways in which globalization deeply connects all communities and made clear that our increased use of natural resources is putting our health in danger - particularly for zoonotic illnesses correlated with deforestation.

As a constituent, I am asking you to please vote for the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights.

I urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0783.

Sincerely,
Todd Larsen