



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

P.O. Box 6988 Largo, MD 20792
www.ProgressiveMaryland.org
Contact@ProgressiveMaryland.org
Facebook.com/ProgressiveMaryland
@Progressive_MD

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

TO: Senator Smith, Chair, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Elizabeth Scarito, Progressive Maryland Environmental Justice Campaign, White Hall, District 27
DATE: March 9th, 2022
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.

As a retired internal medicine doctor, I ask you to support HB596/SB783 Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights. The proposed amendment would add the right to a healthy and sustainable environment to the Declaration of Rights section of the Maryland State Constitution, placing this right on par with all other civil rights protected by our constitution.

From 1975-1987 I worked as a chemical engineer before deciding to go back to school to become a doctor. During some of those years, I worked in a chemical plant in the Curtis Bay area of Baltimore. I saw first hand the effect that area chemical plants were having on the air, water, and land of that area. Now, years later that plant has been closed and the land is a toxic wasteland. The Fairfield housing community that was near the plant seems to have been abandoned, but there are still lots of homes in Brooklyn that were affected by the fumes, polluted water, and ugliness of the area. One of the reasons I decided to train in medicine was to help people affected by such exposures.

2022 is THE year to support, vote and pass the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights. Our climate demands it. Our bodies demand it. Our children and future generations demand it. This is an election year and THE opportunity to give the voters their say about amending the Declaration of Rights section of the state constitution: 1) each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthy and sustainable environment, and 2) the state, as trustee, shall protect, conserve, and enhance Maryland's natural resources,



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including its air, water, lands, wildlife, and ecosystems, for the benefit of present and future generations.

As human beings, we rely on clean air, clean water, healthy soil, and a stable environment. Without these essentials, all other rights are jeopardized. Maryland residents face increasing exposure to pollutants in the air, water, and land which have negatively impacted public health with increased rates of lung disorders, heart disease and cancer. Even worse, the pandemic revealed that these disparities in exposure to air pollution also increased the likelihood of developing Covid19 in black and brown communities.

Please say YES to HB596/SB783 Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights!

Respectfully,
Elizabeth Scarito MD,
Progressive Maryland Environmental Justice Campaign
escarito1@gmail.com, 443-515-9586

We urge a FAVORABLE report on **SB0783**.