



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

SUPPORT

HB 596/SB783

Constitutional Amendment-Environmental Rights
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Good afternoon Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, and Chair Pinsky, and Vice-Chair Kagan, members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, my name is Linda Boyd and today, I submit testimony on behalf of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland that represents 108 parishes and over 45,000 parishioners throughout Maryland. We support SB 783.

This Amendment would guarantee that every person in Maryland, every child of God, as a matter of basic human dignity, has a fundamental right to a healthy environment. This also requires the State to protect those rights and to put the health of its citizens first. This would assure that every Marylander who suffers from environmental degradation could challenge actions that create an unhealthy environment.

Communities of color and low-income neighborhoods bear the burden of environmental pollution and degradation and the resulting health disparities. In November 2021, the Maryland Episcopal Diocese overwhelmingly passed Resolution 2021-03 that supported the adoption of such an amendment. Caring for the health of our neighbors is a form of loving our neighbors as ourselves. It is a moral issue. Our State is not protecting the health of all of its residents. It is wrong for the State to put the interests of industry over the health of its residents, especially low income and minority communities. This amendment would legally protect their rights and all Marylanders' rights to live in a healthy environment.

We respectfully request a favorable report.