



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

Lowe House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Room 200 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
Phone 410-841-3374 | 301-858-3374 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3374 · Fax 410-841-3342 | 301-858-3342  
latino.caucus@house.state.md.us · www.mdlatinocaucus.org

DAVID FRASER-HIDALGO, CHAIR  
JOSELINE A. PEÑA-MELNYK, VICE-CHAIR  
GABRIEL ACEVERO, TREASURER  
JESSE T. PIPPY, SECRETARY  
MADELIN MARTINEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: March 28th, 2023

RE: HB0829 Retail Service Stations – New Construction – Setbacks

### **The MLLC supports HB0829 Retail Service Stations – New Construction – Setbacks, 2023**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0829.

Gas stations are disproportionately clustered in low-income communities and communities of color.<sup>1</sup> 1.81 million Latino individuals live within a half-mile of an oil or gas facility, Latinos have higher rates of commuting in high-density areas, and 48% of Latinos in the US live in counties that frequently violate ground-level ozone standards.<sup>2</sup> The resulting negative environmental and economic impacts of service stations are felt more by the Latino community.

Pollution from gas stations – primarily from surface-level spills and leaks and from eroding underground storage tanks – leaches into soil, contaminates waterways, and affects air quality.<sup>3</sup> Proximity to gas stations have been linked to negative health impacts resulting from increased soil and air pollution. Specifically, gas stations emit dangerous levels of the known carcinogen benzene and ozone, which causes respiratory problems and asthma.<sup>4</sup> The Latino community has relatively high asthma rates in the US.<sup>5</sup> Over 3.6 million Latinos in the U.S. suffer from asthma, Latinos are also twice as likely to visit an emergency room for asthma, and Latino children are twice as likely to die from asthma compared to their white counterparts.<sup>6</sup> A typical gas station dispensing one million gallons per year sees annual spillage of 70 to 100 gallons, while a large-volume gas station like Costco could spill up to 2,000 gallons annually.<sup>7</sup> This issue is especially pertinent in our state because an ongoing Maryland lawsuit since 2018 has accused

---

<sup>1</sup> Taft, N. (2022, June 21). *Cities are banning new gas stations. More should join them*. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jun/21/gas-stations-us-cities-fuel-prices>.

<sup>2</sup> Ortiz, C. (2021, June 6). *The fight for Clean Air: The Latino community at the forefront*. League of United Latin American Citizens. [https://lulac.org/blog/The\\_Fight\\_for\\_Clean\\_Air/](https://lulac.org/blog/The_Fight_for_Clean_Air/).

<sup>3</sup> Browne, O. (2022, September 16). *US reliance on gas stations threatens environmental justice*. US Reliance on Gas Stations Threatens Environmental Justice. <https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2022/gas-stations-environmental-justice/754766>.

<sup>4</sup> Taft, *Cities are Banning*. (Internet).

<sup>5</sup> Ortiz, *The Fight for Clean Air*. (Internet).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Browne, *US Reliance on Gas*. (Internet).

about 65 manufacturers, marketers and distributors of gasoline of contaminating its waters, specifically 41 groundwater sites, with the additive MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether).<sup>8</sup>

This bill would place restrictions on the construction of new retail service stations, by requiring new projects to be set back at least 1,000 feet from existing service stations. It prohibits a person from constructing a retail service station if they do not have a setback certification issued by an approving body. Furthermore, this bill is targeted at service stations which are projected to sell more than 1,000,000 gallons of gas per year. By putting these restrictions in place, large stations would be unable to proliferate in these neighborhoods, forcing out locally owned stations in the process. Through a science-based approach, this bill will address the health concerns of gas stations in surrounding communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0829.

---

<sup>8</sup> Malo, S. (2021, November 4). *Maryland clears hurdle in lawsuit over gasoline groundwater pollution*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/maryland-clears-hurdle-lawsuit-over-gasoline-groundwater-pollution-2021-11-04/>.