



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB0829
(RETAIL SERVICE STATIONS - NEW CONSTRUCTION - SETBACKS)

Delegate Sheila Ruth
March 3, 2023

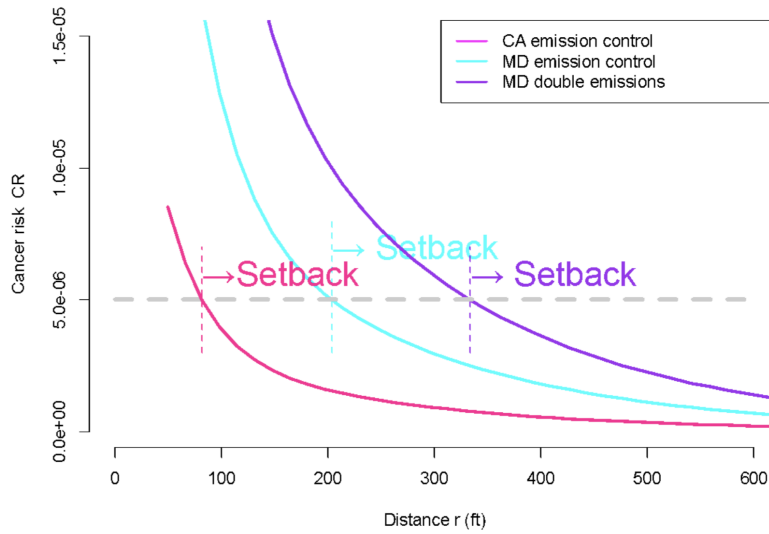
In recent years there has been a proliferation of new large gas stations built across the state, often adjacent or very near to existing gas stations. Their size and proximity to existing stations raises serious health concerns.

Gasoline contains chemicals with known health impacts. Of these, benzene is of particular concern as it has been classified by the U.S. EPA and others as a known human carcinogen, and long term exposure is linked to cancer diagnoses (especially blood cancers such as acute myeloid leukemia). The cancer risk is related to the level of exposure, so is impacted by factors such as the percentage of benzene in the gasoline, amount of gasoline released into the atmosphere and groundwater, and a person's distance from the source of the emission. Clustering these stations close together increases the risk of cancer for the surrounding area due to the increase in emissions.

Despite the work done to reduce these emissions and those of other toxic chemicals in gasoline, other opportunities for contamination remain: the Onboard Refueling Vapor Recovery systems in cars are imperfect, accidental spills during refueling can seep into the concrete and evaporate into the air as well as wash off into the surrounding environment, and benzene may still be emitted from underground tanks through vent pipes under certain conditions.

Dr. Markus Hilpert, a researcher and professor at Columbia University (whose views are not necessarily represented by those expressed by Dr. Hilpert during our discussions) who specializes in the intersection of environmental pollutants and their health effects, has echoed these grave concerns.

Below is a chart provided by Dr. Hilpert that shows the correlation between cancer risk and distance. The horizontal dashed line indicates a cancer risk of 5 in a million, which is the standard used by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The red line indicates California's cancer risk from gas station emissions correlated with distance. Maryland has less emission controls than California, so the blue line indicates greater distances required for the same risk. The purple line indicates the distance correlation in Maryland for double the emissions as would be the case with two gas stations.



Source: Dr. Markus Hilpert

HB829 would seek to mitigate the health risks to the surrounding communities - that are often disproportionately communities of color - by requiring new gas stations to be built at least 1,000 feet away from any existing gas station.

I urge a favorable report on HB829.