



CLIMATE, LABOR, AND ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY ACT OF 2023

SB 743: Senator Jackson HB 840: Delegate Boyce

March 6, 2023

Organizations Supporting the Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 (House Bill 840)

To the Members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, are writing with strong support for the Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023, House Bill 840. We thank Delegate Regina T. Boyce for her sponsorship of this important legislation.

As Marylanders, we pride ourselves on our commitment to equality and justice for all. For decades though, Maryland has allowed companies to locate harmful, unhealthy, and dangerous projects in ways that overburden communities, especially communities of color and low-wealth communities. Part of this is because Maryland doesn't have a process to adequately consider how projects and polluters impact our state's workers, jobs, and property values. Our state doesn't consider how industry impacts a community's health or our climate when permits are issued. Further, communities nearby have not been consulted about where these projects get sited, and in many cases, have been left out entirely of this process. The Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 will help address environmental injustice at the permitting level for projects that impact the land, air, and water – like industrial operations, wastewater treatment plants, highway expansions, mining operations, power plants, and landfills.

More specifically, the Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 would:

1. Expand reporting requirements for eleven key state agencies, and one academic center, to include climate change and environmental justice (“geographic impacts”) on an annual basis and to make it publicly available;
2. Require the Department of Labor to annually report on whether its decisions are supporting equitable wage and labor standards;
3. Require a comprehensive evaluation of the environmental and societal impacts for environmental permits (and permit renewal) with a high Environmental Justice score in underserved and overburdened communities. At a minimum, this evaluation should include:
 - a. Demographic and health data, as well as any related vulnerabilities in the community;

- b. Climate-related impacts from the proposed project;
 - c. Cumulative impacts of pollution in the community;
 - d. Potential methods to minimize or mitigate potential adverse effects in the affected community;
4. Allow MDE to deny or amend permit applications based on this evaluation;
 5. Require an “in-the-know system” where Maryland residents can opt-in to be notified about pending environmental permits in their area.

The Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 is needed (1) to address the fact that Maryland communities feel left in the dark about polluters in their area; (2) to require the state to consider the real-world impacts that polluters have on the environment, health, labor, and well-being of Maryland families; (3) to give Maryland residents the ability to be informed about the impacts that polluters have on the environment, and become more engaged in the environmental permitting process; and (4) to end environmental racism and injustice in Maryland.

We request a favorable report on HB 840.

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Blue Water Baltimore
CASA de Maryland
Center for Community Engagement, Environmental Justice, and Health (CEEJH)
Center for Progressive Reform
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Climate Reality Greater Maryland
Elders Climate Action Maryland
Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Latinos Unidos
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Maryland United for Peace and Justice, Inc.
Mountain Maryland Movement
NAACP Maryland State Conference
ShoreRivers
Sierra Club Maryland
Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Waterkeepers Chesapeake