



Maryland Business & Clergy Partnership

Maryland.bcp@gmail.com

March 6, 2023

Chairman Kumar Barve

Vice Chairman Dana Stein

As a Marylander concerned about environmental racism, we urge you to support the Climate Labor and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 (HB840), sponsored by Delegate Regina T. Boyce. The Maryland Business Clergy Partnership (representing over 1,000 businesses and clergy members in the State of Maryland) supports HB840-Climate Labor and Environment Equity Act of 2023 - Equality and Justice for All.

For decades, Maryland agencies have allowed companies and others to build wastewater treatment plants, mining operations, major highways, and other projects in or near low-wealth communities and communities of color. These projects often threaten public and environmental health – but state agencies don't fully consider how they harm people, communities, or our planet or seek meaningful input from affected communities. This lack of consideration has led to poor health outcomes for many overburdened and underserved communities:

*Low-income communities of color in Maryland are more likely to live in close proximity to facilities that release toxic chemicals.

*Black people in Maryland are more likely to die from heart disease, cancer, and stroke. *Black Marylanders are also 1.1 times more likely to suffer from asthma, and 2.3 times more likely to die from asthma, compared to white people. Low-income Black Marylanders are 100 times more likely to face increased cancer and air toxics risks than Black Marylanders with income levels in the top quarter of the state.

The Climate Labor and Environmental Equity Act of 2023 will help end environmental racism by strengthening the process to obtain permits for projects that threaten our air, land, water, and people. Specifically, it will enable key state agencies, like the Maryland Department of Environment, to fully assess the health and environmental impacts of such projects on marginalized communities and prioritize these communities for public protection.

I urge you to pass the Climate Labor and Environmental Equity Act of 2023. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Gaskins'.

Joseph Gaskins, CEO

Maryland Business Clergy Partnership