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March 8, 2023

TO: The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: HB 0840: Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equality Act of 2023

The Office of the Attorney General “OAG” respectfully requests a favorable report on Delegate Regina T. Boyce’s bill, House Bill 840. This bill provides an important enhancement to Maryland Department of the Environment’s (MDE’s) capacity, providing it with clear statutory authority to deny, amend, or condition permit decisions based upon MDE’s assessment of environmental justice factors and related impacts to communities surrounding a permit applicant’s facility, and to proactively involve those communities in its decisions. In addition, HB 840 will authorize MDE to charge a reasonable fee to support implementation of these new requirements. Finally, the bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) to annually report on whether agency decisions support businesses that promote equitable labor and wage standards, as specified within the bill.

House Bill 840 will address potential climate impacts and effects on underserved and overburdened communities, seek environmental justice, and provide opportunity for the working people of Maryland. House Bill 840 would create a quantifiable way to identify and protect overburdened communities, engage in meaningful communication, and prioritize them for investment. Equal treatment and respect for all of our neighborhoods and communities are long overdue.

For all the foregoing reasons, the OAG requests a favorable report on House Bill 840.

cc: The Hon. Delegate Boyce & Committee Members