



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

***House Bill 840
Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023***

Position: Support with Amendments
Committee: Environment & Transportation Committee
Date: March 08, 2023
From: Gabrielle Leach

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or the Department) **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** House Bill 840. Under the leadership of Secretary McIlwain, environmental justice and equity is a statewide priority for MDE. The Department will be looking at everything through an equity lens with the intent of leaving no Marylander behind.

House Bill 840 would require MDE to do the following:

- Conduct a climate and environmental equity evaluation prior to issuing certain permits, if the permit may impact overburdened or underserved communities;
- Communicate with residents residing, within or adjacent to, the census tract within which a permit would be issued via text, phone, email, or regular mail notifications regarding any facility with a pending or final permit approval; and
- Adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of a new subtitle.

Additionally, HB 840 would allow MDE to:

- Deny or alter a decision or amend the conditions under a pending permit based on the findings of its climate and environmental equity evaluation; and
- Charge applicants a reasonable fee to cover costs associated with complying with the bill, including technical assistance offered to applicants and residents of affected census tracts.

Amendment

The bill further addresses issues of equity in labor and wage standards. These issues are important, but beyond MDE's expertise and would require significant support from the Maryland Department of Labor. MDE respectfully requests that this language be deleted and have the bill solely address environmental permitting.

MDE has been working with the House and Senate sponsors on this legislation and appreciates the consideration of our amendment.

Accordingly, MDE urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for House Bill 840.