



February 28, 2023

**HJ1 Environmental Human Rights (MEPA@50 Resolution)
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Healey, Vice-Chair Holmes, and Honorable Members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of HJ1, the Maryland Environmental Human Rights Act. Passage of this resolution will reaffirm the principles of and help to implement the Maryland Environmental Policy Act of 1973 (MEPA), which asserts that “each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment” and that “the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the State’s diverse environment is necessary for the maintenance of the public health and welfare and the continued viability of the economy.”

In the 50 years since the passing of MEPA, most state agencies failed to develop regulations and policies to give “teeth” to this important legislation. Also in these years, the state experienced significant environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, including the decline of Maryland’s state insect, the Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly, whose black and gold colors match those of the state flag. Coincidentally, it was in 1973 that the Checkerspot was designated Maryland’s state insect. Once abundant in the state, the Checkerspot is now listed as Threatened, due to habitat loss, climate change, and other factors.

We must fully implement MEPA to help reverse this downward spiral and to: establish methods and procedures in all state agencies to ensure a healthful environment, promote processes for public information and participation in environmental decision-making, incorporate environmental justice definitions and processes, and create procedures to support the enforcement of permits.

According to Green Towson Alliance’s research, environmental laws in Baltimore County are waived far too often to the benefit of developers and the detriment of communities, especially low-income and communities of color, who suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation. The health of our communities, the economy, and the environment are inseparable. Please support HJ1 to reaffirm MEPA on its 50th anniversary to improve the health of our beautiful natural resources, the people, and the economy of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Adreon Hubbard for the Green Towson Alliance
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