



# Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

## Testimony in Support HJ 1 - Environmental Human Rights

To: Chair Anne Healey and the Members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee  
From: Phil Webster, PhD  
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Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.  
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **HJ 1 Environmental Human Rights** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committee.

The UULM-MD is a statewide faith-based advocacy organization, with over 1,000 members, based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Two Principles are particularly relevant. The Second Principle, *justice, equity and compassion* in human relations and the Seventh Principle, *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*.

Unitarian Universalists believe in *justice and equity in human relations*. We know that environmental degradation harms marginalized communities with alarming regularity and intensity. We know that the health and dignity of these communities are adversely impacted, with rates of cancer, asthma and early death clearly related to the levels of pollution. We know that these communities, due to the vestiges of years of racial discrimination, do not have resources to engage in lengthy and expensive legislative remedies for the environmental pollution. We know that these communities are not protected by State and Local enforcement of existing laws. And we KNOW this injustice can and must be remediated.

Unitarian Universalists also believe that we *should all have respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. Environmental pollution degrades water and air quality, contributes to climate change from the use of fossil fuels impacting everyone. Every person on this earth will suffer from environmental degradation and climate change, the only thing we DON'T KNOW is when and to what extent.

In 1973 the Maryland General Assembly passed and the Governor signed the Maryland Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), which stated:

*All state agencies must “identify, develop, and adopt methods and procedures that will assure that:*

- 1. Environmental amenities and values are given appropriate consideration in planning and decision making along with economic and technical considerations;”*
- 2. Study appropriate alternatives to present policies, programs, procedures and conflicts*
- 3. Involve the public utilizing “the fullest practicable provision of timely public information and understanding”*

Maryland Environmental Policy Act MEPA@50 Resolution Goals are:

- To recognize the 50th anniversary of MEPA
- To reaffirm the General Assembly’s support of environmental human rights
- To promote the fullest implementation of MEPA
- To open the door for legislation enhancing MEPA
- All is service to fully protecting environmental human rights for all

“Recognition of moral obligations is a prelude - a stage in the evolution of the public conscience which leads to legal obligations and rights.”

Edith Brown Weiss, *In Fairness to Future Generations*

All Marylanders need bold and urgent action! Please keep us on the right and moral path towards a livable climate and a sustainable world. We owe it to our children.

We support this resolution and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.

*Phil Webster, PhD*

Lead Advocate, Climate Change UULM-MD