

Bill Number: HJ0001

Committee: House Rules and Executive Nominations

Position: Favorable

Date: March 2023

My name is Marie LaPorte. I have lived in Reisterstown, Towson, and Owings Mills, Maryland for about 28 years and I support this joint resolution to serve as a reminder of the importance of a healthful environment, without which we cannot sustain ourselves or anything else.

In 1962, Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book, *Silent Spring* was published. In 1967, California Air Resources Board¹, a precursor to the 1970 establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)² was launched. In 1969, Lake Erie or more specifically, the Cuyahoga River caught fire³. In 1971, an award winning ad campaign featuring an actor portraying a Native American crying at the sight of our spoiled environment became indelibly etched into the memories of millions of Americans. In 1972, the Clean Water Act⁴ and Oceans Dumping Act also passed and in 1973, Maryland passed the Maryland Environmental Policy Act, a.k.a. MEPA.

The 1960's and 1970's were a time of reckoning with our pollution and the consequences of over a century of industrialization with a of lack of regulation. While our air and water are cleaner in many respects, many, especially lower income Americans, have a reduced life expectancy due to poor air quality in their neighborhoods. Roughly 25%-33% of Maryland students have asthma, which nationally costs us \$82 billion⁵. Residents of Baltimore have higher rates of asthma, lung ailments, and heart disease due to air pollution, which lessens their lives by years.

While important state and Federal legislation had meaningful impact, it has not lived up to the promise Americans expected of it. Citizens expected that the legislation was going to really clean up our environment, but it has not done what we need it to do.

- We are now experiencing a climate crisis of existential proportions.
- Most animals including humans, even in utero babies, have nanoplastics in their bodies with little understanding of the long-term harm.
- There are tens of thousands of chemicals, many known to cause serious harm to humans and the environment, but the E.P.A. has only banned nine.⁶ Maryland has several known PFAS contamination sites throughout our state, but little has been done to document the impact to the people who live in the surrounding communities despite knowledge that these chemicals are unsafe at any level.

- Over 20 years ago in 2001, Baltimore experienced a train crash of hazardous materials that burned for over five days, not unlike the recent chemical disaster in East Palestine, Ohio.⁷
- Many of our waterways are unsafe for swimming, drinking, fishing, and even human contact and our beloved Chesapeake Bay scores a D+ despite years of effort and private funding to counter pollution and sediment issues.⁸
- Respected scientists say the current period, Anthropocene, is the 6th known mass extinction. One million species are on the brink of extinction, a decline not seen in 10 million years.⁹

I urge you to support the MEPA@50 resolution to remind everyone in our government of “each person’s fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment.” This important Maryland law has been eroded and neglected for 50 years. We need this important reminder now, we may not get another chance.

I urge you to pass this important resolution, HJ0001.

Sincerely,

Marie LaPorte
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¹ CA.gov, <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/about/history>

²EPA.gov, <https://www.epa.gov/history#:~:text=Celebrating%2050%20years%20of%20the,1970%2C%20by%20President%20Richard%20Nixon.>

³ Smithsonian Magazine, June 19, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/cuyahoga-river-caught-fire-least-dozen-times-no-one-cared-until-1969-180972444/>

⁴ EPA.gov, <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/history-clean-water-act#:~:text=As%20amended%20in%201972%2C%20the,setting%20wastewater%20standards%20for%20industry.>

⁵ Baltimore City Health Department, <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/node/454>

⁶ Business Insider, <https://www.businessinsider.com/epa-only-restricts-9-chemicals-2016-2#:~:text=There%20are%20over%2080%2C000%20chemicals,only%20a%20handful%20of%20times.>

⁷ <https://www.wmar2news.com/infocus/in-focus-20-years-after-the-howard-street-tunnel-fire-what-still-needs-to-change>

⁸ Maryland Matters, September 28, 2022, <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/09/28/report-details-alarming-levels-of-toxins-being-dumped-in-md-waterways/>

⁹ U.N. Report, May 6, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report/>