



# Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

## Testimony in Support

### HB 840 - Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023

To: Senator Barve, Chair and the Members Environment and Transportation Committee and Chair Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee  
From: Phil Webster, PhD  
Lead Advocate on Climate Change  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.  
Date: March 8, 2023

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **HB 840 - Climate, Labor, and Environmental Equity Act of 2023** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committees.

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*. For generations, the state of Maryland has made decisions about locating harmful, unhealthy, and potentially dangerous projects in ways that have overburdened many communities in the state, especially communities of color and low-income communities. This has damaged those communities and inhibited their residents from leading safe, healthy, and productive lives.

The bill would place impediments in continuing this practice by requiring thorough planning, evaluation, reporting, and mitigation of negative impacts on underserved and overburdened communities before polluters are permitted to operate. In addition the bill would defer harmful projects near overburdened and underserved communities.

This bill would also advance labor equity associated with the projects described above by requiring prevailing wages, providing health care and retirement benefits, participating in apprenticeship programs, and aspiring to a goal of 25% of employees being returning citizens, women, minority individuals or veterans.

Unitarian Universalists also believe that we should all have *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. Climate change is a serious and growing threat to all Marylanders. Maryland is especially vulnerable to the effects of sea-level rise and increasing frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall. Meeting the goals of the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 requires significant investment in clean green energy AND remediating the vestiges of decades of environmental racism.

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 bill and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.

*Phil Webster, PhD*

Lead Advocate, Climate Change UULM-MD