



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3185 • 301-858-3185 • 800-492-7122 Ext. 3185 • Fax 410-841-3175 • 301-858-3175 • Black.Caucus@house.state.md.us

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Chairman William C. Smith, Jr.
Environment & Transportation Cmte.
251 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Korman and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers strong favorable support for House Bill 24 - Environment – Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions, a bill mandating environmental justice evaluations by the Maryland Department of the Environment for communities that rank in the top 25th percentile regarding pollution in the state. The bill addresses pollution from various facilities across the state, including industrial facilities, landfills, incinerators, sewage treatment plants, and hazardous substance facilities. **This bill is on the 2024 legislative priority agenda of the Black Caucus.**

Environmental racism is an issue that impacts the livelihoods of Black Maryland residents, most notably their health. Often, Black people in Maryland are more likely to live in areas with worse water and air quality, in addition to a higher exposure to hazardous waste. For example, in the Lothian of Anne Arundel County, many residents live near wastewater treatment plants and mining sites, most of which are noncompliant with the Department of the Environment's operating permits. In Lothian, 20 percent of all people living within a 3-mile radius of the mining sites are Black.

This leads to adverse health outcomes for Black Maryland residents. Nationally, Black Americans are exposed to 56 percent more pollution than they produce, compared to only 17 percent less for their white counterparts. As a result, Black Americans experience higher risks of different health issues such as asthma, birth defects, cardiovascular disorders, and cancer. In Maryland specifically, Black residents are 3 times more likely to be exposed to air pollution compared to white residents. Additionally, Black Maryland residents are 1.1 times more likely to suffer from asthma and 2.3 times to die from the disease, even when factoring in air pollution exposure.

House Bill 24 will combat environmental racism in Maryland by mandating the Department of the Environment to evaluate facilities and whether they meet the MDE's regulations on environmental safety. This legislation will protect the health of all Black Maryland residents and eliminate their exposure to pollution across the state. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland supports House Bill 24 and asks that you vote favorably on this bill.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland