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February 20, 2024

TO: The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

The Honorable C.T. Wilson
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Tiffany Johnson Clark
Chief, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

RE: House Bill 24 – Environment – Impact of Environment Permits and State Agency Actions – **Support**

The Office of Attorney General respectfully urges this Committee to report favorably on House Bill 24 -Environment - Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions. House Bill 24 provides an important enhancement to Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE's) capacity, providing it with clear statutory authority to deny, amend, or condition permit decisions based upon MDE's assessment of environmental justice factors and related impacts to communities surrounding a permit applicant's facility, and to proactively involve those communities in its decisions.

Additionally, House Bill 24 will authorize MDE to charge a reasonable fee to support implementation of these new requirements. Finally, the bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) to annually report on whether agency decisions support businesses that promote equitable labor and wage standards, as specified within the bill. House Bill 24 will address

potential climate impacts and effects on underserved and overburdened communities, seek environmental justice, and provide opportunity for the working people of Maryland.

House Bill 24 would create a quantifiable way to identify and protect overburdened communities, engage in meaningful communication, and prioritize them for investment. Equal treatment and respect for all of our neighborhoods and communities are long overdue.

For the foregoing reasons, the Office of the Attorney General urges a favorable report on House Bill 24.

cc: Committee Members