



## **Testimony HB0024: Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions**

**Position: OPPOSE**

February 21, 2024

My name is Sonia Demiray, I am the co-founder of the Climate Communications Coalition, a member of the Mid Atlantic Justice Coalition, and a Frederick County Resident. Our group opposes HB0024 because it does not meet the needs of Marylanders. Our overburdened communities badly need a real environmental justice bill.

The list of permits this bill would apply to does not prioritize environmental justice concerns identified by environmental justice communities during listening sessions. With one exception, the list of permits is the same since 1993 because, instead of addressing the concerns put forward by communities, MDE is using a 30-year-old list of permits to prioritize how it allocates limited agency resources to address environmental injustices.

As written, this bill does not move the needle toward providing the protection that affected communities need and have asked for. While the bill covers several water permits, it does not address the pollution that has been the most dangerous for human health and the most pervasive and persistent for Marylanders: air pollution. HB0024 does not cover renewal permits for any existing air pollution sources or permits to construct new air pollution sources when those permits are issued by the Maryland Public Service Commission (“PSC”). In other words- we are not covering the biggest sources of pollution in the state: fossil fuel sourced power plants, trash incinerators, biogas digesters, biomass for energy, roads, etc.

This bill would require MDE to spend significant staff time conducting reviews that will not meaningfully address the most serious environmental justice and health concerns raised by communities in Maryland. We encourage MDE to revise the bill to include real protections for all of our communities, especially environmental justice communities, by including strong air quality permits for all polluting sources, no matter whether they’re seeking new permits for new sources of pollution or renewing older permits.

Thank you.

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