



HB1375

Environmental Justice - Identification of and Investment in Overburdened and Underserved Communities - Report

Testimony before House Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing March 6, 2024

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Korman and Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the committee, my name is Virginia Smith, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of HB1375**, which would require the Department of Environment to submit an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly identifying overburdened and underserved communities in the State, as well as the percentage of spending for programs in these communities. We thank Delegate Rosenberg for introducing this important legislation.

Historically, low-income communities, communities of color, and Tribal and Indigenous communities have been overburdened with environmental harms, as well as underserved when it comes to providing money and time to solving any of the environmental issues the State needs to deal with, including climate change. This bill is a good first step to address this issue by requiring a report each year, starting December 31, 2024, be prepared and sent to the Governor and General Assembly that identifies the communities that would be considered overburdened and underserved in Maryland. But besides, just identifying these areas, it would also require that the percentage of overall spending from many of the State governmental entities, including Maryland Energy Administration Department of Transportation, Department of Human Services, and many others, on projects, programs, and investments that were distributed to these communities for their benefit from the previous fiscal year be provided as well in the report. Seeing these numbers will help the General Assembly and Governor see where more money needs to be targeted to ensure a fair and equitable division of finite resources.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

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