



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support

Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions

To: Chair Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Phil Webster, PhD
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committee.

The UULM-MD is a statewide faith-based advocacy organization, with over 1,200 members, based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Unitarian Universalists believe in *“justice and equity in human relations”* and *“respect for the interconnected web of all existence of which we are a part.”*

This legislation has many features designed to overcome some of the most egregious vestiges of environmental injustice that many underserved and overburdened communities suffer, where sensitive populations are already disproportionately exposed to high levels of pollution, along with the health harms and other negative consequences of that pollution.

This legislation:

- authorizes the MDE to use its screening and evaluation to inform permitting decisions, such as whether it will deny or impose conditions on a proposed permit in a community with a high “EJ (environmental justice) Score.”
- requires the MDE to set up means for interested citizens to track and weigh in on covered permitting reviews, by text, phone, email or regular mail notifications.
- requires the MDE to deposit fees received through the permitting process into three environment-related funds: the Maryland Clean Water Fund, the Maryland Clean Air Fund or the State Hazardous Substance Control Fund.
- clarifies reporting requirements for major state departments on their performance towards attainment of the State’s emissions reduction goals.

However, we note that the scope of permits covered under this bill remains very limited relative to the scope of health concerns expressed for years by communities affected by polluting installations such as incinerators, landfills, sewage sludge holding facilities and toxic chemical manufacturing operations.

In particular, the permit list written into the bill largely excludes air pollution permits. As public health scientists will confirm, exposure to pollution through inhalation is one of the top concerns regarding effects on human health.

Despite the limitations noted above, the bill creates very important and useful new procedures for balancing public health and economic production through the large facility permitting process. In the interests of achieving a new balance that better addresses long-standing community harms and concerns, the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland urges your FAVORABLE vote on the bill.

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