

Testimony in favor of SB96

Environment - Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions

To: Hon. Brian Feldman, Chair, Hon. Cheryl Kagan, Vice-chair and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Jerry Kickenson

Date: March 4, 2024

I am writing in **favor of Senate Bill 96**, Environment - Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions.

Ever since the [Maryland Advisory Council on Environmental Justice](#) (MACEJ) was established in 1997, it has been recognized that there are serious environmental justice issues in Maryland. Yet, while there has been some progress, such as the creation of the [Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities](#), much more needs to be done. Note, for examples, the struggles in the [Curtis Bay area of Baltimore with the CSX coal terminal](#) or the siting of CAFOs (Consolidated Animal Feeding Operation) predominantly in low-income and communities of color on the Eastern Shore ([studies](#) have shown that CAFOs are usually developed in existing communities of color and low-income communities, instead of the CAFO attracting these populations).

HB24 would add concrete teeth to existing law (Environment Article, sections 1-101, 1-601, 1-602) that requires permit applications to include an environmental justice score, by instructing the Department of the Environment to actually incorporate that score in its review process and, if a possible impact on an underserved or overburdened community is determined, to conduct a climate and environmental equity evaluation, which may include cumulative impacts. Critically, the findings of the evaluation may determine permitting decisions or conditions.

Without passing HB24 into law, the existing requirement to report an environmental justice score is just pro forma with no real effect. Maryland residents deserve better.

I respectfully urge you to reach a **favorable** report for SB96.

Respectfully yours,

Jerry Kickenson

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References:

[Maryland Advisory Council on Environmental Justice](https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/defunct/html/13envij.html)

(<https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/defunct/html/13envij.html>)

[Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities](https://mde.maryland.gov/Environmental_Justice/Pages/CEJSC.aspx)

(https://mde.maryland.gov/Environmental_Justice/Pages/CEJSC.aspx)

[Curtis Bay residents ask state to shut down South Baltimore CSX facility](https://www.baltimoresun.com/2023/12/14/study-documents-toll-of-coal-dust-on-south-baltimore-curtis-bay/)

(<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2023/12/14/study-documents-toll-of-coal-dust-on-south-baltimore-curtis-bay/>)

[Environmental Injustice and Industrial Chicken Farming in Maryland](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8582720/)

(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8582720/>)