



Testimony Supporting SB 978
Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee
February 25th, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Andrea Orozco, I work as the Faithful Advocacy Lead at Interfaith Power & Light (DMV) and I am here today to request a **favorable report** on **SB 978**.

Interfaith Power & Light (DMV) is a grassroots organization working with over 1,200 congregations across the state and thousands more individuals. We work to support these communities and people of faith as they live in their values to care for our common home and our most vulnerable neighbors.

We believe that we all deserve to live and worship in healthy communities and SB 978 would ensure we have the tools necessary to protect our most impacted communities from new polluting facilities. Our processes should be working for and with people. By allowing the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to reject or alter permit applications for polluting facilities based on an analysis triggered by a community's environmental justice score, Maryland can preserve the dignity and health of our communities while meeting our energy demands.

Our work with congregations has made one thing clear: faith leaders across the state are increasingly concerned for the health and access to clean air of their congregants and the communities they serve. The Second District of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church has recently created an environmental justice ministry across their network aimed at caring for and restoring our common home. This includes over 120 congregations in Maryland alone.

In particular, Reid Temple AME in Prince George's County has implemented not only their EJ ministry but has become a beacon in our state for a more sustainable and green way of living. These churches care about protecting their members' health, and they should have a voice in decisions to impose polluting facilities on their communities.

This bill would give us the opportunity to prevent further harm and ensure we are working to redress the ways these facilities are making our neighbors sick. We urge a favorable report on SB 978.