

My name is Dr. Jeffrey V. Johnson and I live in Reisterstown which is in Senate District 10. I am co-founder of the Chesapeake Earth Holders Community of Engaged Buddhism which is a member of the Interfaith Power and Light Network of faith based congregations in Maryland. I am presenting written testimony in support of the CHERISH Act SB978.

As an environmental health scientist and Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland with a PhD in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, I believe the CHERISH Act addresses a vitally important concern that has been the subject of my own research for many years: the impact of combined environmental exposures on the health of vulnerable populations.

The CHERISH Act will dramatically improve the State of Maryland's capacity to protect vulnerable communities from the adverse health impact of the total combined pollution produced by multiple sources in their environment.

The CHERISH Act will focus on protecting those communities that are already the most polluted and the most vulnerable with the fewest socioeconomic resources. The CHERISH Act proposes to use an already well developed measure of combined adverse environmental exposures to identify the 25% highest risk communities in our state.

The CHERISH Act will serve to protect individuals within communities that are already at risk from new additional exposures that are likely to add further to their environmental burden and health risk. By focusing on the most vulnerable 25% the CHERISH act will introduce a straight forward permitting mechanism that will serve to protect individuals and communities from greater harm from increased pollution from new sources. This is a powerful, practical and straight forward approach that will protect our fellow citizens who are already overburdened.

I would like to thank the Honorable Chair Brian J. Feldman, and the Honorable Co-Chair Cheryl C. Kagan, and the honorable members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment for considering my sincere request to support the CHERISH Act, Senate Bill 978.

