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TESTIMONY ON SB#/0978- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Environmental Permits - Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses (Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

TO: Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0978, **Environmental Permits - Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses (Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

This bill will increase public input on projects being proposed and evaluated by the Department of the Environment to ensure that Environmental Racism negative intentions are known and Environmental Justice implementation are front and center for the communities affected by proposed projects. The Princeton Student Climate Initiative has studied these issues ¹

- Climate change disproportionately affects those who suffer from socioeconomic inequalities, including many people of color. As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, understanding how the current crisis impacts people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is imperative. This article provides a brief overview of the climate challenges faced by communities of color and the steps taken to address the existing disparities.

Environmental Racism

- Environmental racism refers to the unequal access to a clean environment and basic environmental resources based on race. Communities of color are disproportionately victimized by environmental hazards and are far more likely to live in areas with heavy pollution. People of color are more likely to die of environmental causes, and [more than half of the people](#) who live close to hazardous waste are people of color. Some activists call environmental racism [the new Jim Crow](#) as it subjects communities of color to inequitable living conditions. This goes back to beliefs initially perpetuated by the institution of slavery when enslaved Africans were considered “disposable” because they were sent to work in conditions deemed too dangerous for white workers. The authorities in the United States, as well as the institutions in place, often treat areas that are home to minority residents as of

¹ <https://psci.princeton.edu/tips/2020/8/15/racial-disparities-and-climate-change>

less value than wealthy and predominantly white neighborhoods. The burdens of pollution, toxic waste, and poisoned resources are not distributed equally across society.

Environmental Justice

- [Environmental justice](#) is a social justice movement that seeks to dismantle the flawed environmental policies that have long harmed low-income communities and communities of color, and instead pursue policy and development that work to create a sustainable, cooperative, and equitable future for the environment. It rests on the principle that everyone has a right to a clean and healthy environment, and the environmental justice movement strives to attain that. It also seeks to remedy the ills of environmental racism and to give everyone a liveable future. This movement initially began in the late 1980s, when a report was published ([*Toxic Waste and Race*](#)) that proved communities of color were subject to environmental degradation and dangerous pollution.

How do we enforce making environmental justice to prevent environmental racism a part of any project analysis undertaken by our Department of the Environment and add public input as a crucial factor in the decision making?

This bill forces applying certain public participation requirements to permits for projects that have been identified by the Department of the Environment as having an increased potential for adverse community environmental and public health impacts. It mandates that a person applying for certain environmental permits for certain projects with an increased potential to cause adverse community environmental and public health impacts to include in the permit application an environmental impact analysis. Requiring that data be collected and made public will increase the public's ability to effectively advocate for change in projects that can have negative environmental effects on them and their neighborhoods.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0978.