

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB 978 - CHERISH Our Communities Act
Submitting: Marta Orellana
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 25, 2025

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Marta Orellana, and I have been a resident of Baltimore City District 46 for the past 16 years. As a mother of two children—one of whom battles both asthma and autism—I am deeply invested in advocating for environmental justice. That is why I am writing today in strong support of SB978, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

This bill is deeply important to me because, as I mentioned, my youngest son suffers from asthma. For too long, our communities have been left behind, neglected, and forced to bear the burdens of pollution. Families like mine continue to live in areas where harmful environmental impacts accumulate, yet we have little protection from additional pollution.

SB 978 is a critical step toward ensuring that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) fully considers the cumulative impacts of pollution when reviewing permit applications. By supporting this bill, you are taking action to protect the most vulnerable communities from further environmental harm. This bill ensures a more thorough and just permitting process that accounts for the existing pollution burden in communities like mine, safeguarding the health of families already living in vulnerable areas and preventing further negative health impacts on children, like my son.

I urge you to support SB978 and stand with families like mine who deserve clean air, a healthier future, and stronger protections for our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Marta Orellana