

## CITY OF BALTIMORE

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Councilwoman Phylcia R. L. Porter,  
District 10

CHAIR:  
Public Health and Environment  
MEMBER:  
Labor and Workforce  
Public Safety  
Transportation and Land Use

February 19, 2025

Bill Title: SB0978 Environmental Permits - Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses (Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Position: Favorable

To: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

As a Councilwoman, representing Baltimore City's Tenth District I am writing to express my strong support of SB0978, which will provide important, targeted environmental health protections for the communities, like those in South Baltimore who have been overburdened by pollution for generations..

The CHERISH Our Communities Act will address the disproportionate environmental and public health harms that environmental justice communities in Maryland face from pollution generating facilities. For centuries, these facilities have been disproportionately and deliberately sited in minority and economically distressed communities in Maryland. Low-wealth, Black, and other communities of color in Maryland face greater cancer risks and exposure to air toxics due to higher pollution burden.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act amends Maryland's environmental law to provide adequate environmental impact assessment and opportunities for public participation for new, renewed, and expanded environmental permits that are issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Currently, many environmental permit applications do not even include a public engagement process, and do not take into consideration the cumulative harms posed by multiple and historic sources of pollution. The CHERISH Act prioritizes Maryland residents' well-being and ensures that MDE's decision-making processes are transparent and inclusive.

As a public health scientist and local elected official, I know the severe public health challenges and harms that my communities face daily. It is my hope written testimony reflects my commitment as a legislator to ensuring the well-being of our communities for future generations. The state must establish a clear, transparent, and accountable process that empowers community members to actively engage in discussions on toxicity, public health, environmental concerns, land use, and the impact of polluting industries in their neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Councilwoman Phylcia Porter, MPH, MSL - District 10  
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