

**Senate Bill 978 – SUPPORT**

**Environmental Permits - Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses**

**(CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

My name is John Garofolo. I am a recently retired federal test and measurement scientist, a computer scientist, an Anne Arundel Watershed Steward, a citizen environmental advocate for my area, and I have previously been on the board of directors of my community association. I also created the volunteer Anne Arundel Patapsco Environmental Coalition because my area of northern Anne Arundel County along the tidal Patapsco River has been struggling with polluters for decades. I have lived in the community of Stoney Beach for 20 years – a beautiful 62-acre peninsula community in Curtis Bay in Northern Anne Arundel County. It would be an oasis if it wasn't surrounded by polluters.

**My home and many others are within 1000 feet of the coal-powered Brandon Shores power generation station and even closer to the Wagner power-generation station** which was recently converted from coal to other fossil fuels. Our community literally chokes on the fumes of these polluters. We have anecdotal evidence of higher respiratory, cardiac, cancer, and neurological disease in our community and unusual occurrences of these diseases. And I myself suffer from asthma, AFIB, and am a cancer survivor. When the winds from the power plants next to my home blow our direction, I have trouble breathing and my AFIB flares up. And sometimes I have trouble breathing.

But, the state continues to refuse to implement effective air quality monitoring in our area or conduct a health study for fear that it might uncover inconvenient truths. Moreover, our health is threatened by many polluters within just 5 miles of our community including the enormous expanding MPA Cox Creek Dredge Material Containment facility, a petroleum/asphalt processing plant, a chemical plant, multiple toxic material dumps, the horribly polluting Curtis Bay Energy medical incinerator - which is the largest in the country, the CSX coal terminal, and even a radioactive Superfund site. And, we are only two and a half miles directly across the Patapsco from Sparrows Point in which cleanup operations from the pollution from Bethlehem Steel have been ongoing for years. And there are countless other highly contaminated legacy pollution sites within our Zip Code. In addition to the smoke from the power plants, I often also smell the horrible odors of sewage from the waste water treatment plant near my community and the plasticky odor of the medical waste incinerator nearby. We have so many sources of air pollution that we can never escape them. And our soil is contaminated as is the tidal Patapsco and the sediment in it.

Our communities suffer from economic and home value burdens along with the health burdens from all of these sources of pollution. **Even real estate apps now grade communities on their pollution burden. And mine and homes for miles around have a low score.**

And we have no idea how much the pollution around us has impacted our ability to work because of illness or to the organizations which depend on us and the state and municipalities which have to pay for social services when we're unable to work and need uncovered medical care. The health effects of pollution have largely uncaptured impacts on our state's economy – from significant health costs for citizens, insurers, and the state, to sick days and unemployment that impact businesses, to strain on our medical system, and to depressed home values. We have suffered environmental injustice for decades. The last thing we need is more polluters near our homes. **The hidden costs of pollution have not been properly measured and assessed. They most certainly should figure into decisions about permitting polluters and recovering costs from known polluters in ways that support overburdened communities.**

While I completely understand the need for a thriving industry presence in Maryland, the weight of the economic and health burdens of that should not be born on the back of environmentally overburdened communities concentrated in particular areas such as the tidal Patapsco. The burden needs to be measured, understood, and fairly shared. Moreover, the negative impacts of pollution need to be reversed in overburdened communities like those in and near Curtis Bay and around the tidal Patapsco by removing polluters, more heavily monitoring known ones and ensuring their compliance, and constraining permits for modifications which would add to pollution burdens. More effective monitoring can largely be accomplished through automation as pollution sensing technology has improved and become much more economical. Communities need to be made aware of the impacts to their health and the state needs to create an analysis of health data to address the hidden costs of pollution. And communities need to be alerted when there are high-pollution days caused by coal and fossil fuel and waste burning. Part of these critical needs can be addressed by Senate Bill 978. **We've paid for polluting industries with our health for too long. It's time for environmental justice in our industrial permitting, comprehensive compliance monitoring, analysis, and enforcement, and addressing the economic burdens on community health and the cumulative and comprehensive impact of pollution on overburdened communities and the other stakeholders who are indirectly impacted by pollution. And a process is needed that that is more inclusive for impacted communities. Overburdened communities shouldn't have to play jump rope with the existing permitting process that is designed to work against them.**

Senate Bill 978 along with other synergistic bills proposed in this legislative session will create the necessary infrastructure to create a measured approach to balancing the burden of pollution on Maryland's most overburdened communities. I strongly support Senate Bill 978 and its commitment

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**to environmental justice for overburdened communities. This bill is a landmark for future bills that evaluate and regulate the permits for polluters based on quantitative cumulative measurement of pollution burdens to communities. Maryland can lead the way for environmental justice.**

Sincerely,

John S. Garofolo

Stoney Beach, Curtis Bay, MD

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