

My name is Margaretta Jill McKay and I live in East Bethesda which is in District 16. I am a member of the Chesapeake Earth Holders Community of Engaged Buddhism. Our community is a member of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, a network of faith based congregations in Maryland. I am presenting written testimony in support of the CHERISH Act SB978.

I believe the CHERISH Act addresses a vitally important concern: the impact of combined environmental exposures on the health of vulnerable populations in Maryland.

By limiting the number of permits for certain categories of business, the CHERISH Act will protect communities that have the fewest socioeconomic resources and already carry the greatest burden of environmental exposure to polluted air, soil, and water.

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. By focusing on the most vulnerable 25% it 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.