



February 11, 2024

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Executive Director

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SUPPORT: SB250 - Department of the Environment - Fees, Penalties, Funding and Regulation

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports HB250 - Department of the Environment - Fees, Penalties, Funding, and Regulation and we thank the Department for taking the initiative on this important issue.

In 2018 the Department of Legislative Services issued an Executive Branch Staffing Adequacy Study¹, which documented staffing inadequacies in eleven state agencies. At that time they noted that the Department had a quantifiable staffing shortage of 245 PINs including both inspectors and administrative positions. This shortage has grown over the intervening years as the needs for enforcement of environmental laws that protect our air, land, water and communities have outpaced the growth of the agency's resources.

The responsibility to protect our communities against pollutants that poison our air and water lands primarily on the Maryland Department of the Environment. In the face of a significant budget deficit this year, ensuring that the Department's fee structure adequately supports these efforts is both critical and responsible to protect our state's fiscal health as well as the health of our communities.

We would draw attention, especially, to the Air Emission Permit Fees. The modest, and appropriate fee increases outlined in this bill will give the Department the resources to manage the program that oversees the permits of greatest concern to the front-and fenceline communities who bear the brunt of air pollution. These additional funds could assist MDE in increasing their direct work with communities bearing a disproportionate burden of the state's pollution, including addressing the cumulative impacts from multiple sources of pollution. The increase in this fee will give the Department the resources needed to ensure the health and safety of our communities as we attract new industries that contribute to a growing and robust economy, making sure no one is left behind.

Maryland LCV urges a **Favorable** report on this important bill.

¹ <https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/TaxFiscalPlan/Executive-Branch-Staffing-Adequacy-Study.pdf>