

JAZZ LEWIS  
*Legislative District 24*  
Prince George's County

MAJORITY WHIP

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 151  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3691 · 301-858-3691  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3691  
Fax 410-841-3055 · 301-858-3055  
Jazz.Lewis@house.state.md.us

## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis on HB1484 CHERISH Our Communities Act**

Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of my legislation, HB1484, the CHERISH Our Communities Act, which will bring environmental justice to the front and center of our state's permitting process. Specifically, by looking at those facilities that are most likely to contribute to pollution, we are ensuring that we take a targeted approach to combating pollution as these facilities seek permits from the state. This legislation sets out to protect overly-polluted zipcodes in our state by requiring additional review and steps for polluting facilities that seek to locate in these communities.

This legislation is so essential because though every Marylander has faced the harms of pollution, this burden has not been felt equally. In fact, the distribution across the state of those who experience pollution is incredibly inequitable. There are many communities in Maryland that face far more pollution than others. This means that certain parts of our state disproportionately feel the accompanying health and environmental harms. This is particularly true for communities along the I-95 corridor.

The CHERISH Act mandates that MDE produces burden reports for polluting facilities that are locating in areas with a high environmental justice score. By mandating the creation of burden reports, we are ensuring that Maryland as a state is better equipped to understand how certain kinds of projects will impact communities across the state. Specifically, focusing on area codes that have an abnormally high Environmental Justice Score means that we are working to end the over-pollution certain communities have faced throughout the years. The CHERISH Act also empowers MDE to take a closer look at polluting facilities and deny permits to facilities that will cause harmful health and environmental effects.

I also want to let the committee know that we are in the process of working with MDE and advocates on sponsor amendments to streamline and fine-tune the language to help lower the fiscal note and improve the bill overall, and I will be happy to present these changes to the committee once they are finalized.

The CHERISH Act is a crucial step forward to advancing environmental justice in Maryland and to finally ending the inequitable pollution felt in our communities.

**For these reasons, I ask for a favorable report.**