



Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB1484 – CHERISH Our Communities Act
Organization: Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit
Submitting: Rhonda Kranz, President
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 11, 2025

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting the Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit's (MCRT's) written testimony in support of HB1484. The MCRT is a nonprofit that evaluates transit projects for social equity, environmental impact, environmental justice, economic viability, and community accessibility. We represent a broad coalition of communities, civic organizations, environmental groups, and residents.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act addresses the disproportionate environmental and public health harms that environmental justice communities in Maryland continue to face from facilities such as incinerators, fossil fuel power plants, manufacturing plants, data centers, landfills, and large transportation projects. The bill amends Maryland's environmental law to provide adequate environmental impact assessment and opportunities for public participation for new, renewed, and expanded environmental permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).

Currently, when considering new permits to pollute, Maryland does not evaluate how multiple pollution sources in one area combine to affect public health. Each permit is reviewed in isolation, without considering the total (or cumulative) impact on local residents' health. HB1484 creates new permitting requirements highlighting community engagement and public notice for all major pollution permits and ensures careful review of permits that would increase pollution in overburdened communities.

The MCRT has been focusing on one such large project that would further pollution on already overburdened communities. The proposed Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMaglev) train project would begin in Washington, DC, and run approximately 40 miles through Prince George's, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore Counties, terminating in the city of Baltimore with one stop at Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The route is a combination of tunnels and via duct. Seventy percent of the route runs through environmental justice communities. There are no stops along the route that would benefit these communities, yet they are exposed to air and water pollution from the concrete manufacturing and the construction of 50-foot diameter tunnels and infrastructure. Additionally, estimates for the tunnel soil removal, alone would

require up to one million dump truck trips during eight years of construction that would impact these communities.

Under HB1484, if the MDE determines that a project would cause or contribute to an increased potential for adverse community environmental and public health impacts in an at-risk census tract, then it must deny the permit or include conditions under certain circumstances. Already overburdened communities in Maryland deserve the respect and concern for their health and welfare currently lacking in the state's permitting process.

New Jersey, New York, and Minnesota have already passed similar legislation. This is not a bill that will require significant funds from the state, but it will make a significant impact on the health and quality of life for those Marylanders' who need it most. HB1484 provides a thoughtful process to avoid future harm. For these reasons, the MCRT respectfully urges a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.