

Testimony Supporting HB1484

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 11, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

I am an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. I assist in directing community engagement projects aimed to mitigate health disparities faced by communities that experience multiple environmental burdens over their life course. These engagements are occurring in the same communities I was raised in, born to two immigrant parents in Baltimore City. I am writing to express my strong support of HB1484, the CHERISH Our Communities Act, that will meaningfully reduce the pollution from multiple point sources in the communities I serve.

Early in my career, I co-founded and am co-Director of Medicine for the Greater Good (MGG), an initiative focused on training healthcare professionals on the merit of community engagement, while actively partnering and collaborating with various communities in Baltimore City, in an effort to overcome health disparities through strategic, health systems approaches. One of the projects of MGG is the Lay Health Educator Program, which has trained many certified community health workers in understanding how to help promote health and prevent disease in their neighborhoods. As a community doctor I see first-hand how so many of the illnesses and chronic health conditions facing our residents are a result of living in neighborhoods that are overburdened by pollution.

Currently, I am the co-director of the Community Engagement Core (CEC) of the Johns Hopkins Center for Childhood Asthma in the Urban Environment (CCAUE) where aim to assure educational programs are implemented in the community that focus on children's environmental health and pulmonary-related health disparities. The rates of asthma we see in Baltimore City is no doubt elevated due to air pollution exposures from the many facilities located in the neighborhoods where my patients live, work and raise their children.

I also hold a joint position in the Department of Oncology, in which I assist with cancer screening and management and community outreach and direct the Tobacco Treatment and Cancer Screening Clinic. This clinic serves many patients in the South Baltimore area that are inundated with pollution from incinerators and other facilities that collectively emit excessive amounts of pollution into the air they breathe. The rates of cancer and pulmonary conditions in these communities is considerably greater than in other areas of Maryland. If the CHERISH Act is passed this will be an important first step to begin to consider all these pollution sources together when issuing permits and I believe it will meaningfully improve the health of my patients.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act will address these many environmental harms to prioritize the health and well-being of all Marylanders. I write you today in full support of HB1484.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'P' followed by a horizontal line.

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