

FAVORABLE Testimony for HB1484
The Environmental Permits – Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden
Analyses (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

House - Environmental and Transportation
Walkiria Pool, On Behalf of Centro de Apoyo Familiar

March 11th, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and the members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Centro de Apoyo Familiar is submitting this testimony in **support of HB 1484 The Environmental Permits – Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**. We are a non-profit organization that transforms communities through economic, social, and educational empowerment in collaboration with community and faith-based organizations. Our membership consists of CAF's Connectors Network, which includes over 500 faith-based organizations engaged through the CCN Connectors training program. This program provides faith leaders with clear direction on developing successful community initiatives, raising awareness, and empowering families by connecting them to diverse resources to develop functional families and sustainable communities. We are predominantly located in Maryland, Washington D.C., Virginia, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Additionally, CAF is affiliated with many organizations across the U.S., along with nearby countries such as Guatemala, Venezuela, Mexico, and El Salvador. We seek to uplift and advocate for working-class communities of color who are adversely impacted by environmental justice issues all across Maryland.

HB 1484 is a crucial bill for our state as it mandates that applicants for certain environmental permits include a detailed environmental impact analysis and, if applicable, an existing burden report with their application. Additionally, it places stricter requirements on the Department of the Environment to deny permits under specified circumstances and ensure community participation in the permitting process.

This legislation is vital because it ensures that any new developments are thoroughly vetted for their potential environmental impacts before they proceed. This is particularly important for communities living in at-risk census tracts, which have historically been disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and hazards. By requiring these assessments, HB 1484 will help prevent further environmental degradation and promote healthier living conditions for all Maryland residents.

For example, in communities near industrial sites, residents often face significant health risks without being fully informed of the potential dangers. HB 1484 ensures that comprehensive environmental assessments are conducted, providing transparency and protection for these vulnerable populations.

Passage of The Environmental Permits – Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses (CHERISH Our Communities Act) will:

1. Ensure that any new developments undergo rigorous environmental impact and existing burden assessments before approval.
2. Prevent the Department of the Environment from approving applications lacking comprehensive reports.
3. Promote the equitable distribution of environmental responsibilities, ensuring that all communities, particularly those historically overburdened, are protected from additional environmental hazards.

As an organization dedicated to the empowerment and protection of communities, especially those that are low-income and minorities, Centro de Apoyo Familiar wholeheartedly supports HB 1484. We believe this bill is essential for promoting sustainable development and safeguarding the well-being of Maryland's residents.

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