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Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of Baltimore City and a passionate environmental health advocate, I am writing to express my strong support of HB1484, the CHERISH Our Communities Act. This bill will make an impactful and meaningful differences in the lives of Marylanders that have long been overburdened.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act will address the disproportionate environmental and public health harms that environmental justice communities in Maryland face from pollution generating facilities. For centuries, these facilities have been disproportionately and deliberately sited in minority and economically distressed communities in Maryland. Low-wealth, Black, and other communities of color in Maryland [face greater cancer risks and exposure to air toxics](#) due to higher pollution burden.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act amends Maryland's environmental law to provide adequate environmental impact assessment and opportunities for public participation for new, renewed, and expanded environmental permits that are issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Currently, many environmental permit applications do not even include a public engagement process, and do not take into consideration the cumulative harms posed by multiple and historic sources of pollution. Additionally, those that do include public engagement are often inaccessible for many Marylanders. The CHERISH Act prioritizes Maryland residents' well-being and ensures that MDE's decision-making processes are transparent and inclusive.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Jones  
Passionate Baltimorean  
Department of Environmental Health and Engineering