



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1484

**Environmental Permits - Requirements for Public Participation and Impact
and Burden Analyses (formerly CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Environment and Transportation Committee and
Economic Matters Committee**

FAVORABLE

TO: Delegate Marc Korman, Chair; Delegate Regina Boyce, Vice-Chair; and the
Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee; and

TO: Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair; Delegate Brian Crosby, Vice-Chair; and the
Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: March 7, 2025

The Episcopal Church believes that global climate change is not only a scientific concern or environmental issue, but what the United Nations calls "the defining issue of our time... at a defining moment" (UN Secretary General, September 10, 2018). The Episcopal Church affirms that no community, especially communities living in poverty, should bear the heaviest burden of environmental pollution or degradation.

We view the CHERISH Our Communities Act as an important environmental justice initiative because it will give the Maryland Department of Environment clear authority to consider environmental justice when making permit decisions targeting those communities with high EJ scores. By examining the *cumulative* impact of new permit applications on those communities already overburdened and underserved, the state can require those permits that would increase pollution to include strong pollution mitigation measures. The bill will also enhance public accountability by requiring meaningful community engagement and public notice for those permits impacting these communities.

The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland urges the competent Committees to support the CHERISH Our Communities Act, as an important step toward protecting our most vulnerable and overburdened communities from bearing yet more pollution burdens.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a favorable report.