

Testimony Supporting HB1484
House Environment and Transportation Committee
March 11, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to you today as a resident of South Baltimore and a member of Free Your Voice. A youth-led advocacy group that started from Benjamin Franklin High school back in 2011. I'm super excited to share my strong support for HB1484, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Environmental Justice Communities across the state of Maryland have been bearing the brunt of pollution for far too long. These communities have been deliberately sited near polluting facilities for centuries, and as a result, they face disproportionate health risks. Low-wealth, Black, and other communities of color in Maryland are more likely to get cancer and be exposed to harmful air pollutants.

These communities tend to have higher rates of the health issues mentioned above due to their continuous exposure to pollutants. Vulnerable communities often have fewer resources to mitigate the effects of pollution, such as limited access to healthcare, less political power to advocate for change, and fewer economic opportunities to relocate. The CHERISH Our Communities Act is a game-changer. It will make sure that Maryland's environmental law is fair and inclusive. It will require the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to use proper environmental impact assessments and give the public a chance to voice their concerns before issuing new, renewed, or expanded environmental permits.

I've seen firsthand how pollution has affected people's health. I know of families who have been sickened by the air pollution in their communities. I also know and was one of the people who have protested against polluting facilities, but they've been told that the state won't take action. The CHERISH Our Communities Act will give the state the power to take action and protect the health of its residents. Facilities near us that are polluting, we don't have enough information about them. The CHERISH Our Communities Act will make sure that information about these facilities is easily available online, so that we can all make informed decisions. I urge you to support HB1484 and help make our communities healthier and safer. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Vilma Gutierrez