



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0059:

Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)

TO: Budget and Taxation
FROM: Out For Justice, Inc.
DATE: 2/25/2026

Greetings Chair Guzzone and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee.

My name is Neka Duckett-Randolph, and I serve as the resident environmentalist at Out for Justice, a grassroots organization of justice-impacted individuals organizing to remove barriers to successful reentry and reform harmful systemic policies. Out for Justice strongly supports Senate Bill 59, The Transportation Climate and Alignment Act of 2026.

In Baltimore, the geography of pollution reflects decades of policy decisions that concentrated harm in predominantly Black neighborhoods – the infamous Black Butterfly. These communities face disproportionate exposure to highways, industrial corridors, poor air quality, and chronic disinvestment.

A clear example and cautionary tale relevant to Senate Bill 59 from the Black Butterfly is the Highway to Nowhere. It was a highway project in the 1970s that displaced over 1,500 residents, destroyed homes and businesses, and left behind lasting air pollution and economic isolation. Today, surrounding neighborhoods experience elevated rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, heat-related illness, and lead exposure. These preventable health crises cost the state millions through Medicaid, emergency room visits, lost productivity, and long-term care. Environmental negligence and degradation is not just a health issue – it is a driver of state spending.

It is also a public safety issue.

Communities burdened by pollution, economic isolation, and limited job access experience higher instability. Research increasingly shows that exposure to air pollution and neighborhood neglect correlate with higher rates of violence. We know from our work over the last three years with our Climate Justice Fellows that public safety does not exist independently of environmental and economic conditions. When neighborhoods are physically cut off from employment centers –

as West Baltimore was by the Highway to Nowhere – residents face longer commutes, limited transit options, and fewer pathways to stable employment.

The same overburdened and underserved neighborhoods harmed by redlining and highway construction are the ones paying the highest price today – in poor health outcomes, reduced economic opportunity, and concentrated violence.

Senate Bill 59 recognizes that environmental justice is public health policy, and public health policy is violence prevention policy. Investing in pollution reduction and cumulative impact protections is fiscally responsible and morally necessary.

Maryland has the opportunity, through Senate Bill 59, to acknowledge that environmental justice is central to community safety. **Job access is a violence prevention strategy. Clean air is a public safety strategy. Safe infrastructure is a public safety strategy.** By prioritizing pollution reduction and investment in historically overburdened communities, the state can begin to reverse patterns that have compounded harm for generations.

Supporting Senate Bill 59 is not only about environmental regulation – it is about correcting structural inequities that undermine public health and public safety. The choice before the Committee is not whether Maryland can afford stronger environmental protections. The question is whether Maryland can afford the long-term healthcare costs, lost productivity, tax base erosion, and violence-related expenditures that accompany continued environmental inequity.

Environmental justice is a fiscal responsibility.
Pollution regulation is a public health responsibility.
And good public health policy is good violence prevention policy.

For these reasons, Out For Justice respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 59.