

Testimony Supporting SB0780
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 3, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carlos Sanchez, and I am a resident of Baltimore City and a member of the South Baltimore Community Land Trust, a grassroots nonprofit organization. I strongly support SB0780, the CHERISH Our Communities Act as applied to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) for polluting energy generation.

I live in a community surrounded by major roadways, industrial facilities, and other pollution sources. These impacts are real: they appear in our schools, homes, and hospitals as higher rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic health conditions that disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color.

SB0780 ensures that new or expanded polluting energy facilities—like fossil fuel power plants—cannot be built in overburdened communities if they would worsen disproportionate pollution and health burdens. The Public Service Commission would consider cumulative impacts and provide meaningful opportunities for community input before permitting decisions are made.

The bill is targeted and practical: it applies only to communities already overburdened by pollution and only to polluting energy generation (not wind, solar, or geothermal). It affects very few projects each year and does not place undue burdens on state resources. For existing facilities, operating air pollution permits issued by MDE remain subject to review, allowing tools to reduce cumulative harm.

For too long, communities like mine have carried the weight of pollution without a voice. SB0780 provides a data-driven framework to protect public health where it is needed most while maintaining a focused and practical approach.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of SB0780.

Sincerely,
Carlos Sanchez
South Baltimore Community Land Trust