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Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 780
Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis
(CHERISH our Communities Act)

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
March 3, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on SB 780, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – Burden Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act). This legislation is a critical companion to broader environmental justice reforms and addresses a longstanding gap in how major energy and infrastructure projects are approved in Maryland.

Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) authorize the construction of large-scale energy and utility facilities that can have lasting environmental, health, and community impacts. These projects including power generation and transmission infrastructure often operate for decades and shape land use, air quality, and environmental conditions long after approval. Yet historically, CPCN decisions have focused narrowly on technical feasibility and system need, without consistently incorporating environmental justice considerations or cumulative community impacts.

SB 780 modernizes the CPCN process by ensuring that decisions reflect the full range of consequences associated with large infrastructure projects. The bill recognizes that energy reliability and economic development must be balanced with public health, environmental protection, and equity.

Communities that have already experienced disproportionate exposure to pollution are frequently the same communities considered for additional infrastructure. Without clear standards, transparency, and meaningful engagement, CPCN approvals can unintentionally reinforce historic inequities. SB 780 responds by embedding environmental justice principles directly into the CPCN review process.

The legislation strengthens the framework by:

- Requiring a more comprehensive assessment of environmental and public health impacts associated with CPCN-eligible projects;
- Ensuring that cumulative impacts on overburdened or underserved communities are meaningfully considered;
- Improving coordination between agencies responsible for energy regulation, environmental protection, and public health; and
- Expanding opportunities for community input and transparency during the CPCN review process.

Importantly, SB 780 does not halt infrastructure development or undermine grid reliability. Rather, it promotes smarter, more responsible siting and planning decisions. By requiring impacts to be evaluated before approvals are granted, the bill reduces the risk of downstream conflict, litigation, and costly project delays that can arise when community concerns are addressed too late in the process.

The need for this legislation is underscored by evolving energy demands and climate realities. As Maryland transitions toward cleaner energy sources and modernizes its grid, the scale and location of new infrastructure will matter. Decisions made today will define environmental and public health outcomes for generations. A CPCN process that accounts for cumulative impacts and community context is essential to ensuring that this transition is both sustainable and equitable.

SB 780 also reinforces public trust. When residents see that approvals are based on transparent standards and inclusive decision-making, confidence in regulatory institutions is strengthened. Conversely, when communities feel excluded from decisions that affect their health and environment, opposition hardens, and outcomes worsen for all stakeholders.

At its core, SB 780 affirms that environmental justice is not an afterthought, but a foundational component of responsible infrastructure planning. It aligns Maryland's energy authorization process with modern expectations of accountability, equity, and public participation.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 780.

With kindest regards,



Benjamin Brooks