



PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

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Bill Title: [SB0781](#) Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Iman Habib, Climate Policy Analyst on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Date: February 24, 2026

My name is Iman Habib, Climate Policy Analyst for Progressive Maryland, a member-led, power-building organization that centers working class voices as we tackle a wide range of issues, including environmental justice. We have over 125,000 members spanning across Maryland with significant bases in Baltimore City, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, and Harford counties, as well as the Eastern Shore. Black and Brown communities have the right to be in decision-making spaces when it comes to actions that impact their health and environment.

Progressive Maryland is in strong support of SB781 - Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act).

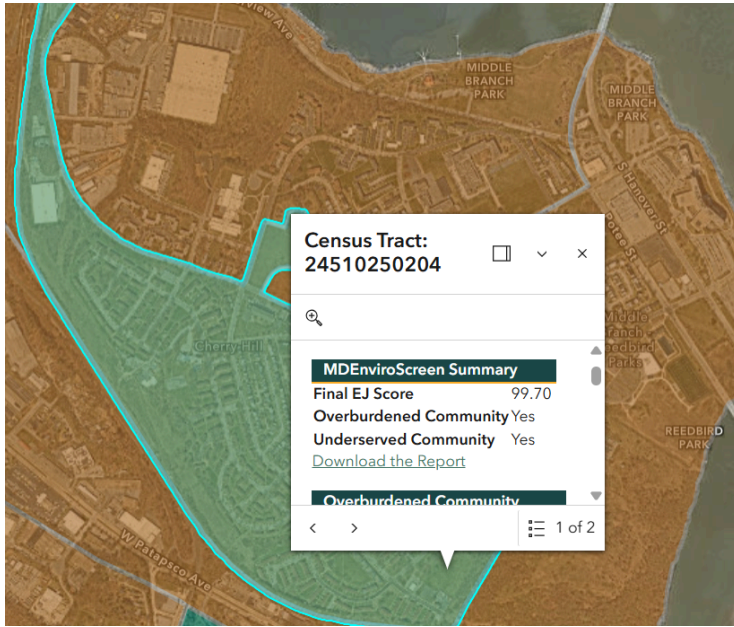
This bill ensures that the state considers the environmental and health impact on communities living in close proximity to proposed non-energy generation facilities. From our work on the ground, we hear member stories everyday about the cumulative burdens imposed onto them by surrounding industries. To put this into perspective, the Baltimore City neighborhoods of Cherry Hill, Westport, and Brooklyn have overall Environmental Justice scores of 99.7,¹ 100,² and 98.4³, respectively—some of the highest in the state of Maryland. This means that these communities have a higher pollution burden than at least 98% of other areas, clearly demonstrating the disproportionate environmental and health effects on these residents.

For example, hazardous waste landfill proximity EJ scores are 96.2, 98.5, 95.9, respectively for Cherry Hill, Westport, and Brooklyn; while the EJ scores for asthma discharges are 99.3 in Cherry Hill and 97 in Westport. But these are not mere datapoints—they are the livelihoods and stories of real people. We personally have spoken with residents of these neighborhoods who live close to the WIN Waste Wheelabrator (“BRESKO”) incinerator. Among them are those who developed cancer; whose entire families in their neighborhood block died of cancer; who were diagnosed with osteoporosis and other chronic diseases after continued exposure to the pollutants and toxic substances released from BRESKO and other surrounding facilities.

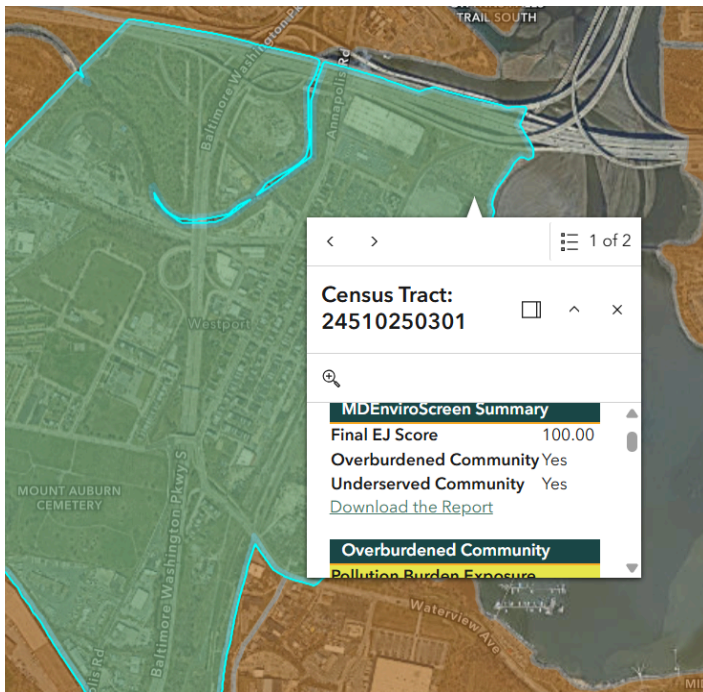
As long as facilities continue to be proposed in these neighborhoods, it is especially crucial that we factor these community perspectives into the decision-making process. By “cherishing” our

communities' lived experiences, stories, and values, we can truly expect meaningful change and tangible outcomes for Marylanders. **Progressive Maryland urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB781.**

¹EJ Score from Cherry Hill neighborhood in Baltimore City



²EJ Score from Westport neighborhood in Baltimore City



³EJ Score from Brooklyn neighborhood in Baltimore City

