

February 27, 2026

**Testimony on:** SB781 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Nathaly Montufar

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 3, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Nathaly Montufar, I am 15 years old, and I am an 8th grade student at Sonia Sotomayor Middle School. I live in Langley Park, in District 47. I am a part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for SB781 – CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and communities across Maryland.

This legislation would make decisions fairer and more protective of communities that are already dealing with high levels of pollution. Right now, permits for new facilities are reviewed one at a time, without fully considering the total or cumulative pollution in an area. This means that neighborhoods already carrying a heavy pollution burden can end up with even more harmful facilities nearby.

CHERISH Our Community Act would allow agencies like the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider environmental justice data when deciding whether to approve or deny permits. That's important because it focuses on real health impacts people are experiencing.

The CHERISH Act is very important to our Community and environment because it requires evaluating pollution from nearby sources, adding stronger conditions to approved permits, and ensures meaningful community participation in decisions. In practical terms, it gives residents a voice and helps prevent more damage before it happens by reducing cumulative pollution and prioritizing public health, especially in overburdened areas.

CHERISH Our Community Act would improve air and water quality, protect families' health, and create a more just system for everyone in Maryland.

I respectfully urge you to support SB781 so that all Maryland families, especially children can grow up in healthier, safer environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaly Montufar

