

**Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable**

**SB 0781 – 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)**

February 27, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gita Lefstein, and I am a resident of Baltimore County, Maryland. I am writing in support of SB 0781, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

I am a retired teacher who taught in Cherry Hill in Baltimore for a number of years. One of the students whom I taught died a few years later as a result of asthma. She was still a child. She should not have died. Air pollution is a major factor in asthma. People in poorer neighborhoods tend to be stuck with a greater concentration of polluting industries which contribute to major health problems and early deaths. The CHERISH Our Communities Act would require the Maryland Department of the Environment to limit new polluting industries in overburdened areas, reduce pollution from already existing industries when they apply for renewal of their permits and allow people in the neighborhood to have input in such decisions.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **SB 0781**.

Thank you.