

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



**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of Wicomico County, and a resident concerned about environmental justice, I am writing to express my strong support of SB0780, the CHERISH Our Communities Act applying to CPCNs for polluting energy generation.

This bill applies CHERISH Our Communities Act principles to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, which are the permits needed by new or expanding power plants or other facilities putting energy onto the grid. (Existing power plants that pollute must maintain an operating air pollution permit issued by MDE that will be subject to SB0780.)

It is targeted in geography: it applies only to parts of the state that are burdened by disproportionate pollution.

It is targeted in scope: it will apply only to polluting energy generation (not wind, solar, or geothermal), meaning that it will apply to very few projects each year and won't strain state resources to administer.

This bill prevents new polluting energy generation from being built if the Public Service Commission determines, through a deliberative public process with public input, that allowing it to be built would contribute to a disproportionate pollution and health burden on the nearby community.

No one should be in favor of forcing environmental justice communities that are already overburdened by pollution to host even more pollution to put more electricity on our regional grid to benefit communities far away - or data center power demands.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Rachel Casteel*  
*Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health (SESH)*