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**Senate Bills 0780 and 0781 – SUPPORT**  
**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (SB 0780)**

**and**

**Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health (SB 0781)**

**(CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dawn Hegarty. I am a resident of the Riviera Beach Community in Northern Anne Arundel County, District 31, and a property owner in Curtis Bay, Baltimore City, District 10. I am writing to express my strong support for SB 0780 and SB 0781, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

This legislation is critical to ensuring stronger oversight of permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), without adding new taxes or financial burdens on residents who are already paying with their health and quality of life after decades of exposure.

I am also a certified Anne Arundel County Watershed Steward. I raised my children along the Patapsco River watershed. My family has lived in Pasadena, Maryland since 1986, and we have owned property in Curtis Bay since 1987. For decades, we have witnessed firsthand the cumulative impacts of industrial activity, aging wastewater infrastructure, and regulatory gaps in communities that are already overburdened.

Communities like Curtis Bay and parts of Northern Anne Arundel County share the same airshed and watershed. Pollution does not stop at district lines. What enters our air settles into our waterways. What runs off hardened surfaces in overburdened communities flows untreated into our streams, rivers, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Stormwater runoff carries oil, heavy metals, chemicals, and debris from industrial sites and densely developed areas directly into the waters where our children's fish and crab.

These cumulative impacts do not just affect people — they damage our ecosystem. They degrade water quality, harm aquatic life, disrupt habitats, and weaken the overall health of our watershed. As stewards of the environment, we cannot separate community health from the health of our waters.

Redistricting and permitting decisions that continue to concentrate industry in already impacted areas only deepen environmental inequities. SB 0780 and SB 0781 help ensure that permits

issued by MDE account for cumulative impacts and do not continue to disproportionately burden the same communities, homes, and ecosystems.

While I cannot scientifically prove direct causation, I can share lived experience.

In my family alone:

- My mother-in-law suffered from Alzheimer's disease.
- My grandmother suffered from Alzheimer's disease.
- My father was diagnosed in 2025 with lung cancer and struggled with COPD, asbestos exposure, heart disease, and AFIB.
- My mother battled breast cancer and Parkinson's disease.
- I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2025.

Among friends and neighbors, I have witnessed increases in miscarriages, infertility, asthma, heart disease, ALS, cancers, AFIB, and learning disabilities — on my block alone. The numbers are increasing.

We breathe air affected by heavy industry, including operations from CSX Transportation, incinerators, medical waste facilities, chemical plants, and aging substations located within residential neighborhoods. Mercury and other toxic forever pollutants are documented contaminants in both air and water systems. Even when exposures fall within regulatory limits, cumulative impacts over decades matter.

As a caregiver to family members, and now as a patient myself, I speak not only as an advocate but as someone who feels vulnerable sharing this deeply personal history. I do so because too many families suffer alone, in silence, or behind closed doors.

Environmental justice means no community is left behind, overburdened, or treated as a sacrifice zone. It means transparency, accountability, and fair representation in permitting decisions. It means recognizing that failing wastewater facilities, coal transport, incinerators, medical waste, chemical industries, aging infrastructure, and uncontrolled stormwater runoff compound existing risks — often without adequate safeguards.

SB 0780 and SB 0781 do not halt responsible development. They simply ensure that state-issued permits consider cumulative environmental and public health impacts — including impacts to our waters and ecosystem — before further burdening communities that are already compromised.

No amount of greenwashing will protect us if safeguards and protections are not enacted into law. We can plant trees and restore oyster beds to help save the Chesapeake Bay, but if we do not address cumulative exposure at its source, the health of our communities and our waters, along with the air we breathe will continue to decline.

We all want to save something. How about saving us — and the airways and the waterways that sustain us?

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 0780 and SB 0781.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration.

Respectfully,

Dawn Hegarty

Anne Arundel County Watershed Steward

District 31 Resident & District 10 Property Owner