

**Personal Testimony in Support of SB0781 & SB0780**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shashawnda Campbell, and I am a lifelong resident of Baltimore and co-founder of the South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT). I am testifying today in strong support of SB0781 and SB0780, the CHERISH Our Communities Act, because I know firsthand what it means to live in a frontline community and to fight for the health and safety of your neighbors in the absence of meaningful policy protections.

When I was in high school at Benjamin Franklin High School, I learned that an incinerator was planned to be built less than a mile from our school. I was shocked and outraged to discover that there was no policy in place to protect students, families, and the broader community from this facility. This incinerator would have released twice the pollution of the BRESKO incinerator, which is already the number one air polluter in Baltimore- in neighborhoods that had already carried the cumulative burden of decades of industrial activity, diesel traffic, and heavy infrastructure. I was young, but I understood the stakes: the air we breathe, the safety of our lives as children, and the very survival of our community were at risk. I, along with neighbors and classmates, had to fight to prevent it from being built. We shouldn't have had to do that, especially knowing that our neighborhoods already host over 70 permitted industrial facilities. No one should have been allowed to add more pollution on top of that.

This fight was not just about a single facility. It was about the reality that South Baltimore has long been treated as a dumping ground for pollution — a frontline community where the state allowed cumulative harms to build up over decades without considering health, environmental justice, or community voices. We have seen full neighboring communities such as Fairfield, Wagner's Point, and Hawkins Point completely displaced because of environmental harms. This is not theoretical — this is lived experience, and it has shaped who I am and the work I do today.

Since then, I have dedicated my life to protecting our community from the very harms that once threatened my school and my neighbors. Co-founding SBCLT allowed me to continue this fight on a broader scale: preserving affordable housing, preventing displacement, and ensuring that residents of South Baltimore have a real voice in decisions that affect our environment, health, and neighborhoods. Our mission is rooted in lived experience — we have seen the consequences of unchecked industrial expansion and cumulative pollution firsthand, and we know that the current system fails communities like ours.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act is a pivotal opportunity to do better. When you know better, you do better — and we know the harms of creating environmental justice communities period but it is even more harmful without accounting for cumulative impacts. Passing this legislation would prevent more neighborhoods from being forced to bear layers of pollution, health risks, and displacement pressures. It would ensure that future permitting decisions consider real-life

community conditions, health burdens, and the voices of those most impacted. This is not just a policy change; it is a moral imperative.

SB0781 and SB0780 are about more than rules and regulations. They are about fairness, accountability, and protecting communities that have been historically overburdened by pollution. For communities like South Baltimore, passing this bill would mark a turning point — a commitment that Maryland will no longer allow frontline communities to carry disproportionate environmental harms simply because of where they live.

I urge the Committee to give SB0781 and SB0780 a favorable report. It is time to act, to prevent further harm, and to honor the health, safety, and dignity of Maryland's frontline communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Shashawnda Campbell  
Co-Founder, South Baltimore Community Land Trust