



March 3, 2026

**Testimony of Bryan Dunning
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**Before the Maryland Senate's Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Requesting a Favorable Report on SB0781: Environmental Permits – Requirements for
Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for
Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health – CHERSH Our Communities
Act)**

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and the members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB0781 (the CHERISH Act) on behalf of the Center for Progressive Reform. The Center is a research and advocacy organization that focuses on advancing good governance and achieving equitable public protections. The CHERISH Act requires that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) assess certain permits for polluting facilities located in disparately impacted communities in Maryland to determine whether they will add to the cumulative health impacts borne by the community. Critically, CHERISH requires that not only MDE conduct this analysis, but resolves a historic issue where the Agency *could* review the cumulative impacts, but could not base a permitting determination on that information. CHERISH empowers MDE to act and provides a pathway forward for Maryland to meet the challenge of its long promise to make good on advancing environmental justice in the state. As such the Center for Progressive Reform requests a **Favorable** report on SB0781.