



Testimony on SB 780
BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Date: March 3, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

[Maryland Climate Partners](#) strongly supports **SB 780**, which would clarify the authority of the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider cumulative environmental and public health impacts when evaluating applications under its jurisdiction. This bill is an important complement to Maryland's climate and environmental justice policies and supports more consistent implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA).

Maryland Climate Partners is a coalition of environmental, faith, consumer advocacy, and social justice organizations focused on the full and equitable implementation of the CSNA. The coalition formed in 2021 to support the passage of bold climate legislation, and we continue to advocate for policies that ensure Maryland has the tools and resources necessary to meet its climate commitments while protecting affordability and advancing equity.

One of the coalition's 2026 policy priorities is ensuring that state climate policies meaningfully **protect overburdened and underserved communities**, which have historically experienced disproportionate exposure to pollution and environmental hazards. **SB 780** advances this priority by ensuring that infrastructure and energy-related decisions reflect cumulative, real-world impacts rather than narrow, project-by-project assessments.

Energy and utility infrastructure decisions can have long-lasting consequences for surrounding communities, particularly when facilities are sited in areas already experiencing elevated pollution burdens. **SB 780** addresses this challenge by making clear that the PSC may consider cumulative impacts as part of its existing review processes. This clarification supports more comprehensive evaluations while remaining within the Commission's current statutory role.

Like its companion bill, **SB 780** does not impose new mandates or predetermine outcomes. Instead, it provides the PSC with clearer direction on how to integrate cumulative impacts considerations into its decision-making, promoting consistency, transparency, and

alignment with state climate and equity laws. Clear statutory guidance also benefits applicants by establishing more predictable expectations for review.

Maryland is undertaking significant updates to its energy system to address aging infrastructure, reliability needs, and long-term cost considerations. As the Public Service Commission reviews these investments, cumulative impacts consideration is especially important to ensure decisions are informed by the full environmental and public health context in affected areas. **SB 780** helps ensure that progress toward cleaner, more reliable energy does not overlook communities already facing significant environmental and public health challenges.

SB 780 represents a careful, forward-looking refinement of Maryland's regulatory framework. It strengthens implementation of existing law, supports equitable outcomes, and helps ensure that state energy decisions are informed by the full context in which they occur.

We strongly urge a favorable report on **SB 780**.