

February 27, 2026

Testimony on: SB781 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

Submitting: Katie Bautista

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 3, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Katie Bautista, and I am a student at Hampstead Hill Academy. I live in Baltimore City, in District 41. I am writing to express my strong support for SB781 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and communities across Maryland.

I have lived with asthma since birth. Every day, I worry about how the air I breathe affects my health, especially at school and in my neighborhood. Many Latino and low-income communities, including mine, are exposed to high levels of pollution from traffic, industry, and other environmental hazards. These cumulative impacts make it harder for children like me to stay healthy, focus in school, and simply enjoy being kids.

Despite facing the greatest environmental and health burdens, our communities are too often left out of decisions that affect our lives. The CHERISH Our Communities Act would help ensure that state agencies consider the real impacts of pollution on vulnerable communities and make more equitable decisions that prioritize our health and future.

I respectfully urge you to support SB781 so that all Maryland families—especially children—can grow up in healthier, safer environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Katie Bautista