



## TESTIMONY FOR SB0781

### Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Brooks

**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0781 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

For decades, decisions made by the Department of the Environment have been made with the intent to facilitate the building of infrastructure rather than what was necessary for the public good. What those policies have left us with are areas of that state that are toxic to the residents who live there and never had a voice.

The CHERISH Act would realign the goals of the PSC to ensure that the infrastructure we do build (and renew permits for) would have safeguards for the residents of the state. It would require –

- Any new permit applications to include an Environmental Impact Statement and Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) Report
- MDE to conduct a public notice and review process for these permits
- MDE to prepare a final Existing BURDEN Report based on public comment and input from stakeholders
- MDE to determine whether issuing a permit would cause an increased potential for adverse impacts on the community
- MDE to make information about enforcement actions against permitted facilities in covered areas easily available online, and direct 25% of penalties from enforcement actions to the impacted communities

Our members look forward to having our primary environmental watchdog support the public needs in this manner. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.