

RE: Support The CHERISH Act, SB0781/HB1288
TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Members of the Committee
FROM: Elizabeth Tobin, Clerk, Frederick Friends Meeting, Religious Society of Friends
DATE: March 03, 2026

We, Frederick Friends Meeting, are submitting this testimony in support of the CHERISH Act. We feel a deep concern for communities, often underserved, who are burdened with cumulative dangerous pollutants and have little legal access to self-protection.

Although there are many other examples, Brandywine MD is a poster child for communities who have suffered from damaging cumulative contamination with little legal recourse for self-protection. We watched this small, mostly black community, defenseless without adequate regulatory protection, become home to one of the most dangerous fly ash landfills in the nation, four coal and/or gas burning power plants, and a superfund site.

The CHERISH Act protects communities from this kind of harm by empowering the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider not only a single permitted pollutant but to consider the combined effect of pollutants on a community. With CHERISH, agencies will have access to pollution's health impacts threatening communities. Residents will be able to participate in decisions made about their community. Where harm is already being done, CHERISH will enable MDE/PSC to deny permit renewal without reasonable corrections.

We believe all communities without exception have a right to breathe clean air and to drink safe water. For this reason, we urge you to support the 2026 CHERISH Act. Thank you.