

# CHERISH Our Communities Act

*From Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving our Shared Health*

**SB0780 & SB0781**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The undersigned **84 organizations** urge you to pass the CHERISH Our Communities Act, **HB1268/SB0781** applying to permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment and **HB1287/SB0780** applying to certain Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the Public Service Commission. This legislation is critical, timely, and necessary for Maryland to live up to its promises to protect vulnerable communities and leave no one behind.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act (*from Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving our Shared Health*) fills gaps in Maryland's current processes for issuing permits to pollute by incorporating considerations of the cumulative impacts of pollution. Applying best practices from legislation already passed in New Jersey in 2020, in New York in 2022, and in Minnesota in 2023, this legislation will protect Maryland's most at-risk communities that are already overburdened by disproportionate pollution and health harms. It will ensure that communities have a voice in the permitting process and protect public health.

Maryland has considered legislation like the CHERISH Our Communities Act for more than 12 years, and our state is falling behind and failing residents facing environmental injustice. We urge you to pass the CHERISH Our Communities Act in 2026.

Sincerely,

**Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition**

**17 for Peace and Justice**

Michelle Wang, President

**Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments**

Cara Cook, Deputy Director

**Arundel Rivers Federation**

Elle Bassett, South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper

**Audubon Mid-Atlantic**

Jim Brown, Policy Director

**B'More Just Transition Network**

Naadiya Hutchinson, Co-Founder

**Baltimore City 4th District**

Mark S. Conway, Councilperson

**Baltimore Green Justice Workers Cooperative (BGJWC)**

Kimberly Armstrong & Lynn Pinder, Co-Founders

**Baltimore Green Space**

Kindle Samuel, Interim Executive Director

**Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition**

Quinton Batts, Baltimore Project Manager

**CHERISH Our Communities Act**

**SB0780 & SB0781**

Testimony from 84 organizations

**Baltimore Jewish Council**

Abby Snyder, Director of Government Relations

**Baltimore Peace Action**

Richard Ochs, Board Member

**Baltimore Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter Veterans For Peace**

Ellen E Barfield, Chapter Co-Founder and Coordinator

**Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition**

Min. Glenn Isaac Smith, President

**Be the Change Bmore**

Betsy Krieger, President

**Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group**

Tom Taylor, Co-Chair

**Black Girls Vote**

Dea Thomas, Environmental Justice Consultant

**Blue Water Baltimore**

Alice Volpitta, Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper

**Brooklyn Billies Real Estate Club**

Geri Ford, President

**Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry**

Lee McNair, Member

**Center for Engagement Environmental Justice and Health**

Krys White, Associate ED

**Center for Progressive Reform**

Bryan Dunning, Senior Policy Analyst

**Centro de Apoyo Familiar**

Andrea Martinez, Healthy Families Programs Manager

**Charm City Land Trusts**

Cheryl Bryant, Executive Director

**Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

Matt Stegman, MD Staff Attorney

**Clean Water Action**

Jennifer Kunze, Maryland Organizing Director

**Climate Communications Coalition**

Sonia Demiray, Executive Director

**Climate Law & Policy Project**

Donald M. Goldberg, Executive Director

**Coal Kills Baltimore**

John Scheinman, Co-Founder

**Community Development Network of Maryland**

Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director

**Community of Curtis Bay Association**

Greg Sawtell, Board Member

**Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOS (CCAIC)**

Gabby Ross, Founder

**District Heights Sustainability Committee**

Nicole Jackson, Chair

**Earthjustice**

Susan Miller, Senior Attorney

**Environmental Integrity Project**

Leah Kelly, Senior Attorney

**CHERISH Our Communities Act**

**SB0780 & SB0781**

Testimony from 84 organizations

**Environmental Justice Action Team**

Raymond Mosley, Team Leader

**Envision Frederick County**

Elizabeth Bauer, Chair

**Fix Maryland Rail**

Diane Wittner, Organizer

**Food & Water Watch**

Jorge Aguilar, Southern Region Director

**Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition**

Antoine M. Thompson, CEO & Executive Director

**Healthy Climate Maryland**

Abigail Ulman, Grassroots Chair

**High Note Consulting, LLC**

Michael Dalto, President

**Illuminate Maryland**

Rishit Guttam, Co-President

**Indivisible HoCoMD**

Peter Alexander, Co-Facilitator

**Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake**

Anna Awimbo, Director of Leadership Development

**Interfaith Power & Light DMV**

Anjali Gulati, Climate Equity Associate

**J.Neal Design**

Jason Neal, Founder/Architect

**Langley Park Civic Association, Inc.**

Norberto Martinez, Executive Director

**League of Women Voters of Maryland**

Linda Kohn, President

**Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home**

Robert M. Simon, Coordinator

**Maryland Climate Partners**

Laura Bartock, Coalition Facilitator

**Maryland Latinos Unidos**

Carlos Orbe, Jr., Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

**Maryland League of Conservation Voters**

Rebecca Rehr, Director, Climate Policy & Justice

**Maryland Legislative Coalition**

Cecilia Plante, Co-Chair

**Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing**

Dave Arndt, Co-Chair

**Maryland Pesticide Education Network**

Ruth Berlin, Executive Director

**Mobilize Frederick**

Kathy Kinsey, Chair, Government Affairs Committee

**Montgomery Countryside Alliance**

Caroline Taylor, Executive Director

**Mountain Maryland Movement (Frostburg)**

Annie Bristow, Convener

**National Aquarium**

Maggie Ostdahl, Director of Conservation Policy

**CHERISH Our Communities Act**

**SB0780 & SB0781**

Testimony from 84 organizations

**Nature Forward**

Angie McCarthy, Maryland Conservation Advocate

**Office of Councilman Mark Conway**

Mark S. Conway, Councilmember 4th District, Baltimore City

**Office of Councilwoman Phylicia Porter, District 10**

Phylicia Porter, Councilwoman, Baltimore City

**Out For Justice**

Trina Selden, Executive Director

**Potomac Riverkeeper Network**

Betsy Nicholas, President

**Progressive Maryland**

Max Socol, Director of Campaigns

**Reconnecting Communities In West Baltimore Coalition**

Min. Glenn Isaac Smith, President

**SB7 Coalition Inc.**

Michael Middleton, Executive Director

**Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health**

Maria Payan, Co-Founder

**ShoreRivers**

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper

**Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (SURJ3A)**

Lynda Davis, Chapter Coordinator

**Sierra Club Maryland Chapter**

Paula Posas, Deputy Director

**South Baltimore Community Land Trust**

Shashawnda Campbell, EJ Director

**St. Vincent de Paul Church Green Team**

Kathy Younkin, Green Team Chair

**St. Vincent de Paul Church's Racial Equity Group**

Peggy Meyer, Co-Chair

**Surfrider Foundation**

Matt Gove, Mid-Atlantic Policy Manager

**Sustainable Hyattsville**

Greg Smith, Board Member

**The Nature Conservancy**

Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Director

**Third Act Maryland**

Laura Welch, Co-Facilitator

**Trash Free Maryland**

Kelly Doordan, Executive Director

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County**

Erin Gallagher, Board Member and Social Justice Chair

**Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland**

Phil Webster, PdD, Lead Advocate for the Climate

**York Road Partnership**

Dan Pontious, President

**Young, Gifted & Green**

LaTricea D. Adams, Founder CEO & President