

City of Baltimore

Room 527, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Telephone: (410) 396-4822
Email: Phylicia.Porter@baltimorecity.gov



Councilwoman Phylcia R. L. Porter,

District 10

CHAIR: Public Health and Environment

MEMBER:

Labor and Workforce

Public Safety

Transportation and Land Use

February 25, 2026

Bill Title: 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

Position: Favorable

To: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing as a Councilwoman, representative, and resident of Baltimore City's Tenth District to express my strong support for SB0781, which establishes critical, targeted environmental health protections for at-risk census tract communities, including those in South Baltimore. According to the Maryland Environmental Justice (EJ) Tool, neighborhoods in my district score well above the 75th percentile statewide. These communities have endured disproportionate environmental burdens and pollution exposure for generations, and this legislation represents an important step toward advancing environmental justice and public health equity.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act uses a location-based environmental justice approach to address the disproportionate environmental and public health harms facing communities like Brooklyn, Curtis Bay, and Hawkins Point, where polluting facilities have historically been concentrated in minority and economically distressed neighborhoods. The bill strengthens Maryland's environmental laws by requiring facilities in at-risk census tracts to submit reports detailing existing environmental and public health burdens ensuring that cumulative pollution impacts are fully considered and that residents' experiences are meaningfully included in the permitting process.

As a public health scientist and local elected official, I know the severe health challenges and harms that my communities face daily. The state must create a transparent and accountable process that empowers communities to meaningfully engage in decisions about pollution, public health, and land use in our neighborhoods. It is my hope that this testimony reflects my commitment as a legislator to ensuring the well-being of our communities for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phylcia R. L. Porter".

Councilwoman Phylcia Porter, MPH, MSL

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Chair, Public Health and Environment Committee

Baltimore City Council - District 10