

February 27, 2026

Testimony on: SB781 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

Submitting: Marta Orellana

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 3, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Marta Orellana, and I have been a resident of Baltimore City's District 46 for the past 17 years. I am a mother of two children—one of whom lives with both asthma and autism and I am deeply committed to advocating for environmental justice and healthier communities.

I am writing today in strong support of SB781 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is personal to me and my family. My youngest son's asthma is directly affected by the quality of the air he breathes every day. Too often, families like mine live in neighborhoods already burdened by pollution, yet we continue to face new environmental risks without adequate protections.

Communities like ours have been overlooked for far too long. We are exposed to multiple sources of pollution that accumulate over time and create serious health risks for our children and neighbors. The CHERISH Our Communities Act is a critical step toward ensuring that the Maryland Department of the Environment fully considers the cumulative impacts of pollution when reviewing permits and making decisions that affect our communities.

By supporting this bill, you are helping protect families who are already facing environmental and health challenges. You are also taking an important step toward ensuring that every Maryland child regardless of their zip code has the opportunity to grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

I respectfully urge you to support SB781 and stand with families like mine who deserve clean air, healthier neighborhoods, and stronger protections for our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Marta Orellana