

Testimony on: SB0780– Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Submitting: Rhonda Kranz

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 3, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my written testimony in support of SB0780, the CHERISH our Communities Act - BURDEN Analysis. This is an issue of great importance to me. As a Marylander and concerned citizen, I am troubled by the lack of protections against continued siting of polluting facilities near our already overburdened and underserved communities. The State currently looks at each new permit in isolation and does not look at the combined effects of all pollution sources in one neighborhood. There is no protection for local residents who are forced to endure this discriminatory practice.

SB0780 takes an important step in addressing this problem. The bill would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk area to include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report describing and including information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the PSC to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

It is important that this bill addresses environmental justice and health issues. Over the last sixty years a disproportionate number of Maryland's power plants have been cited in communities of color. Pollutants from these plants include mercury and neurotoxins and are especially harmful to children. The communities also suffer from the noise, traffic, and water contamination, and social upheaval that accompany these facilities.

We have seen the impacts of disproportionate pollution in Curtis Bay, South Baltimore, and Brandywine and dozens of other communities in Maryland. We cannot let this continue SB0780 requires the PSC to consider health risks and cumulative effects on our communities. Environmental justice must be front and center as Maryland continues to develop. For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue a FAVORABLE report for SB0780.