

Senate Bills 0780 and 0781 – SUPPORT

Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (SB 0780)

and

Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health (SB 0781)

(CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nikhil Varma, and I am a resident of the Stoney Beach community in Anne Arundel County. I live within direct view of the H.A. Wagner and Brandon Shores power plants, as well as other industrial facilities operating along the Curtis Bay shoreline.

In February 2026, I observed and documented a prolonged black smoke emission event from the Wagner plant lasting more than ten minutes. Maryland Department of the Environment later confirmed that the unit experienced operational issues during a fuel switch from natural gas to oil. While this event was described as temporary, it underscored a broader issue for our community: we do not have localized, real-time monitoring to understand what we are breathing during startup events, fuel switches, or annual oil testing operations.

Our neighborhood exists alongside multiple pollution sources, including fossil fuel power generation, a medical waste incinerator, and a sewage treatment facility. While each facility is regulated individually, the cumulative burden of these emissions is not meaningfully analyzed in permit decisions or renewals. State monitoring stations located miles away are designed for regional compliance, not neighborhood-level impact assessment.

As a resident, it is deeply concerning that communities hosting legacy industrial infrastructure lack transparent, cumulative analysis when permits are issued or renewed. Residents are often asked to accept extended operations of aging facilities for regional grid reliability, yet we are not provided with accessible data or a structured opportunity to evaluate cumulative health impacts.

Senate Bills SB 0780 and SB 0781 create a reasonable and necessary framework to evaluate cumulative pollution burdens and ensure that overburdened communities have a voice in permitting decisions. These bills do not prohibit development; rather, they strengthen transparency, accountability, and public participation in communities already carrying disproportionate environmental impacts.

Nikhil K. Varma | nvarma7450@gmail.com

I strongly support SB 0780 and SB 0781 and respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Nikhil K. Varma

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