



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Fieldman and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bill 781 - 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). The bill requires companies that want to build certain power plants in vulnerable areas to submit a special report, which is a BURDEN report that identifies the current environmental and public health problems in that community. The Public Service Commission must review this information and decide whether approving the power plant would make pollution or health problems worse. If the project causes any additional harmful environmental impacts, it must deny the application in certain situations. The Senate bill protects communities that are experiencing environmental and health challenges from taking on additional harm from new power plants. **This bill is a 2026 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

Black and brown industrial communities have carried the burden of the fossil fuel energy system and are easily targeted for polluting facilities such as industrial sites, mining operations, and hazardous waste landfills. The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland believes that SB 781 incorporates consideration of cumulative impacts into the Maryland process of issuing permits to pollute based on laws that have been passed in New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York.

SB 781 will prevent new polluting facilities from being built in environmental justice communities and ensure public participation in the process, address this longstanding environmental injustice and reduce pollution from existing facilities when their permits are being renewed.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 781.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland