



**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Testimony:** House Bill 1268 – Environmental Permits – Requirements for (CHERISH Our Communities Act)  
**Organization:** Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD  
**Submitting:** Laura Salganik, Chair  
**Position:** FAVORABLE  
**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Committee Members:

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County is submitting this testimony in favor of HB 1268. As Jews, we are obligated to try and repair the world (tikkun olam) and by supporting this social justice bill, we demonstrate our commitment to advancing our Jewish values in the interest of protecting communities overburdened by pollution.

HB 1268 addresses both environmental justice and health issues. The legacy of racism underlies the location of industrial pollution and has led to the disproportionate exposure to harmful environmental or public health stressors in the surrounding communities. HB 1268 would require a new application or a renewal of an environmental permit for a facility located in an at-risk census tract to include a report describing the environmental or public health burdens and require the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to take environmental justice scores, cumulative pollution burden, and public input into account when making decisions whether to issue or renew a permit for an industrial source.

Residents of Curtis Bay have engaged in a years-long fight for the right to breath clean air. Curtis Bay Energy runs the largest medical waste to energy facility in the country and in 2023 was fined \$1.75 million for improperly incinerating its waste. In 2024, the company was sued again by the state. Coal dust from the CSX coal terminal also contributes to pollution in the local neighborhood. Brandywine in Prince George’s County is burdened by the polluted air from four power plants.

By changing the law, MDE will be required to take environmental justice scores and cumulative pollution burdens into account when deciding to issue permits for communities that are severely affected by incineration waste and coal dust and other industrial waste.

**We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 1268.**