



Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony: House Bill 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)
Organization: Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD
Submitting: Laura Salganik, Chair
Position: FAVORABLE
Hearing Date: March 13, 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 1287. 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 1287 addresses both environmental justice and health issues. The legacy of racism underlies the location of power plants and has led to the disproportionate exposure to harmful pollution in the surrounding communities. Residents of Brandywine in Prince George’s County have four power plants and a years-long fight for their own right to breath clean air.

This bill would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) to include with the application baseline understanding of risk, disparities and environmental needs (BURDEN) report that describes and includes information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the Public Service Commission to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

Repeal of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mercury and Air Toxic (MAT) standards for power plants increases the need for a bill like CHERISH to protect the health of Marylanders. MAT standards saved \$33 million in health costs according to the EPA and now those safeguards will be gone.

HB 1287 will require the PSC to factor in health and environmental harms when issuing a CPCN in already overburdened communities. The weakening of EPA protections increases the need for CHERISH to protect these very communities, especially young children who grow up near power plants.

We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 1287.