

Testimony Supporting HB1268 – 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)

House Environment and Transportation Committee – March 13, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and members of the Committee,

My name is Evelyn Hoon. I am a lifelong Marylander, a resident of District 46, and a Doctoral Researcher in Social Anthropology enrolled at the University of Cambridge (UK), where I study environmental health in Baltimore City and North Anne Arundel County. My opinions herein are my own, and do not reflect the position of the University of Cambridge. Today, I am writing to urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB1268 and HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

As a social scientist, my research has investigated the healthcare experiences of older adults experiencing pollution-related chronic illnesses in Baltimore. As you may know, **older adults are highly vulnerable to impacts from air pollution**, which can aggravate heart disease and stroke, lung diseases, and diabetes. For instance, exposure to small particulate matter (PM2.5) increases older adults' risk of hospitalization for cardiovascular and respiratory emergencies, as well as contributing to dementia risk. PM2.5, along with dozens of other priority pollutants, is emitted by stationary pollution sources governed by MDE permits (relevant proposed legislation: HB1268). **Certain zip codes in Maryland, to which CHERISH would exclusively pertain**, face dramatically high burdens of air pollutants like PM2.5.

Current regulations consider sites individually. When each site is permitted to emit 'up to the safe limit,' regions where sites are located in clusters face pollution burdens many times what is safe.

Resultant exposures harm the health of Marylanders, and in turn harm the Maryland economy through loss of economic activity. Through the CHERISH Act (HB1268 and HB1287), we can ensure Maryland's businesses continue to operate, but in a safe, sustainable manner.

Importantly, in reference to the proposed amendments of the Rural Caucus, **Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) must remain in the CHERISH Act**. The Rural Caucus proposes to amend CHERISH to remove CAFO permits. This runs contrary to all scientific and public health evidence, which unquestionably demonstrate the potential for *poorly-permitted* CAFO sites to harm human health. Research spanning several states over 20 years confirms that presence of CAFOs results in statistically

significant increased risks of cause-specific mortality, particularly for diabetes mellitus or cerebrovascular disease. **CHERISH will not shut down Maryland's vital agricultural businesses. CHERISH seeks to ensure that all operations in our state – whether they be landfills, manufacturers, or chicken farms – operate at a common-sense standard that protects residents, workers, and the environment.**

For example, certain CAFO activities, such as the wholesale spreading of ammonia or animal waste products (including microbial irritants) on sites near homes, are associated with increased pulmonary harms. Through the simple BURDEN Report process – the majority of which is available without any effort to businesses via MDE's EnviroScreen tool – and with community input on factors such as wind direction, CHERISH may help businesses understand how to continue operations while mitigating harms to residents' health.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act (HB1268 and HB1287) will take reasonable action to Maryland's most vulnerable populations. It will apply **only specific overburdened and underserved geographic regions**. HB1268 will only apply to a specific subset of MDE permits – primarily air pollution permits, with a narrow list of water and waste disposal permits also included. Resultantly, **HB1268 will not impact most businesses, and will not impact housing or other construction**. HB1268's reasonable and low demand upon MDE will result in major benefits to the health of Marylanders.

The CHERISH Act is personal to me. Through my research, I have developed close relationships with many individuals impacted by air pollution. **Several months ago, a dear friend and central informant for my Masters thesis passed away.** I will never forget all the afternoons spent sitting with him in the local diner, snacking on old bay potato chips and iced tea, watching college football, and discussing his life and medical history. He lived for many years with Asthma-COPD overlap syndrome (ACOS), and was diagnosed with lung cancer in his mid-60s. He was not a smoker or an industrial worker, but he lived his whole life next door to dozens of industrial sites, in a heavily polluted and underserved community – Fairfield, and later Brooklyn, in District 46. He was kind, thoughtful, and endlessly witty. He loved fishing and Christmas movies. He is survived by his five children and three grandchildren. **His death was avoidable.**

As a long-term volunteer at a Baltimore City Recs and Parks location, I also work closely with children in my district, who know firsthand the harms of pollution-related asthma. They are excited about the CHERISH Act, and look forward to your committee's favorable report on the bill. Please see attached below my testimony **copies of letters supporting CHERISH by these young people.**

Today, you have the power to pass legislation to protect Marylanders from pollution-related illness; to re-write this too-familiar story of struggle; to turn over a bright new page for our state, and make Maryland a leader in the nation for environmental protections.

HB1268 and HB1287 will empower MDE and PSC to take reasonable action to protect the health and environment of our state's most overburdened and underserved communities. This bill package, which should be **considered and passed together**, reasonably reforms permitting processes for the Public

Service Commission (HB1268), and the Maryland Department of the Environment (HB1287), as the sponsor panel will detail.

All of us testifying favorable today sincerely hope to celebrate the passing of this exciting piece of common-sense, community-led legislation this session. As a proud Marylander, researcher, and friend and collaborator of those impacted by cumulative pollution, **I strongly urge a favorable report on HB1268 and HB1287.**

Sincerely,

Evelyn Hoon

Private citizen – Resident, District 46

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Doctoral Researcher, Dept. Social Anthropology, Univ. of Cambridge*

This testimony is my own and does not reflect the views of the University of Cambridge.

Reference material for the committee's consideration:

Impacts to older adults:

AirNow.Gov. <https://www.airnow.gov/air-quality-and-health/older-adults/>.

Rogowski et al. 2025. *Long-term air pollution exposure and incident dementia: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. The Lancet Planetary Health, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(25\)00118-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(25)00118-4).

Simoni et al. 2015. *Adverse effects of outdoor pollution in the elderly*. Journal of Thoracic Disease, <http://doi.org.10.3978/j.issn.2072-1439.2014.12.10>

Air pollution and mortality:

Clay & Muller 2019. *Recent Increases in Air Pollution: Evidence and Implications for Mortality*. National Bureau of Economic Research, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w26381>.

Sun & Zhu 2019. *Exposure to outdoor air pollution and its human health outcomes: A scoping review*. PLoS One, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216550>.

Wei et al. 2024. *Exposure-response associations between chronic exposure to fine particulate matter and risks of hospital admission for major cardiovascular diseases: population based cohort study*. BMJ, <http://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2023-076939>

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations:

Heederik et al. 2007. *Health effects of airborne exposures from concentrated animal feeding operations*. Environmental Health Perspectives. <http://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.8835>.

Schulze et al. 2011. *Effects on pulmonary health of neighboring residents of concentrated animal feeding operations: exposure assessed using optimized estimation technique*. Archives Of Environmental & Occupational Health. <http://doi.org/10.1080/19338244.2010.539635>.

Son & Bell 2025. *Health disparities associated with exposure to animal feeding operations, including concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, USA*. Environmental Research Letters. <http://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/adc291>.

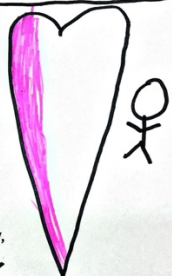
Letters District 46 youth, in support of the CHERISH Act:

Dear Delegate,

My name is Meik, I am
7 years old, and I live in District 46.

I am writing to you because:

Keep us safe
Pass cherish



Sincerely,
Meik

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Dear Delegate, Jaxon

My name is _____, I am
8 years old, and I live in District 46.

I am writing to you because:

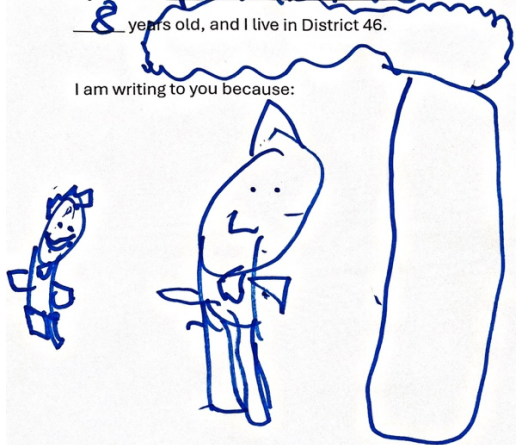
PASS CHERISH.
Keep our air
clean.

Sincerely,
Jaxon

Dan Kan
Dear Senator, rwarte

My name is _____, I am
8 years old, and I live in District 46.

I am writing to you because:



Sincerely,
Dan Kan

Dear Delegate,

My name is Khrista, I am
17 years old, and I live in District 46.

I am writing to you because:

PLZ stop letting are
communities get polluted

Sincerely,
Khrista