

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1268 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Paulina Molina

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Paulina Molina, I am 24 years old, and I am an undergrad student at the University of Maryland, College Park. I live in New Carrollton, in District 22. I am a new member of CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1268 - CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and surrounding communities across Maryland.

Bill HB1268 will allow for decisions to be fairer and will take into account the communities that are already suffering from high levels of pollution. Right now, permits for new facilities are reviewed one at a time, without fully considering the already tainted air quality in the area. This means that neighborhoods already carrying a heavy pollution burden can end up with even more harmful facilities nearby. It is common knowledge that pollution and harmful air quality can lead to many health concerns, specifically respiratory issues, such as asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

CHERISH Our Community Act would allow agencies like Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider environmental justice data when deciding whether to approve or deny permits. By doing so, agencies will have to factor in real health problems and keep in mind that individuals and families are living near polluting facilities.

This bill is vital for keeping our community and environment safe because it requires evaluating pollution from nearby sources, adds stronger protections to approved permits, and ensures meaningful community participation in decision-making. It allows residents to have a voice and helps prevent unnecessary harm. The bill also reduces cumulative pollution and prioritizes public health, especially in overburdened areas.

CHERISH Our Community Act would improve air and water quality, protect families' health, and create a more equal system for everyone in Maryland.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1268 so that all Maryland families, especially children can grow up in healthier and safer environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Paulina Molina