

Dawn Hegarty / Dawnhegarty3@gmail.com

**House Bills 1287 and 1268 – SUPPORT
Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (HB1287)
and**

**Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and
Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving
Shared Health (HB1268)**

(CHERISH Our Communities Act)

House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Testimony in Support of HB1287 and
HB1268**

CHERISH Our Communities Act

**House Environment and Transportation Committee
March 10th, 2026**

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dawn Hegarty. I am a resident of the Riviera Beach community in Northern Anne Arundel County, District 31, and a property owner in Curtis Bay in Baltimore City, District 10. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of **HB1287 and HB1268**, the **CHERISH Our Communities Act**.

These bills are critical to ensuring stronger oversight of permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) by requiring consideration of cumulative environmental and public health burdens in communities that are already heavily impacted.

I am also a certified Anne Arundel County Watershed Steward. I raised my children along the Patapsco River watershed. My family has lived in Pasadena, Maryland since 1986, and we have owned property in Curtis Bay since 1987. For decades, we have witnessed firsthand the cumulative impacts of industrial activity, aging wastewater infrastructure, and regulatory gaps in communities that are already overburdened.

Communities like Curtis Bay and parts of Northern Anne Arundel County share the same airshed and watershed. Pollution does not stop at district lines. What enters our air settles into our waterways, and what runs off hardened surfaces in overburdened communities flows untreated into our streams, rivers, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Stormwater runoff carries oil, heavy metals, chemicals, and debris from industrial sites and densely developed areas directly into the waters where our children fish and crab.

These cumulative impacts do not only affect people — they damage ecosystems. They degrade water quality, harm aquatic life, disrupt habitats, and weaken the overall health of our watershed. As stewards of the environment, we cannot separate community health from the health of our waters.

Permitting and development decisions that continue to concentrate industrial activity in already impacted areas only deepen environmental inequities. HB1287 and HB1268 help ensure that permits issued by MDE and the PSC account for cumulative environmental and public health impacts before additional burdens are placed on communities that have already carried more than their fair share.

While I cannot scientifically prove direct causation, I can share lived experience.

In my own family:

- My mother-in-law suffered from Alzheimer's disease
- My grandmother suffered from Alzheimer's disease
- My father was diagnosed in 2025 with lung cancer and struggled with COPD, asbestos exposure, heart disease, and AFIB
- My mother battled breast cancer and Parkinson's disease
- I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2025

Among friends and neighbors, I have witnessed increasing cases of miscarriages, infertility, asthma, heart disease, ALS, cancers, AFIB, and learning disabilities — on my block alone. The numbers are increasing.

We breathe air affected by heavy industry, including operations associated with rail transport, waste facilities, incinerators, chemical plants, and aging infrastructure located near residential communities. Mercury and other persistent pollutants continue to be documented contaminants in both air and water systems. Even when exposures fall within regulatory limits, cumulative impacts over decades matter.

As a caregiver to family members, and now as a patient myself, I speak not only as an advocate but as someone who feels vulnerable sharing this deeply personal history. I do so because too many families suffer alone, quietly, or behind closed doors.

Environmental justice means no community should be left behind or treated as a sacrifice zone. It means transparency, accountability, and fair participation in decisions that affect public health. It means recognizing that aging infrastructure, industrial emissions, coal transport, waste

facilities, and unmanaged stormwater runoff compound existing risks — often without sufficient safeguards.

HB1287 and HB1268 do not halt responsible development. They simply ensure that state-issued permits consider cumulative environmental and public health impacts — including impacts to our waterways and ecosystem — before further burdening communities that are already compromised.

We can plant trees and restore oyster beds to help save the Chesapeake Bay, but if we do not address cumulative exposure at its source, the health of our communities, our waters, and the air we breathe will continue to decline and all of environmental efforts in saving our historical Patapsco River, the Chesapeake Bay, waterways and community's is for not!

We all want to save something. How about saving us — and the airways and waterways that sustain us?

I respectfully urge a **favorable report on HB1287 and HB1268.**

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Hegarty

Anne Arundel County Watershed Steward
District 31 Resident & District 10 Property Owner