



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1287:

TO: Chair and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Angel Cook, Out For Justice Member
DATE: 3/13/2026

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members,

My name is Angel Cook, and I am a resident of Harvey Johnson Towers in West Baltimore. I am writing to urge a favorable report on the CHERISH Our Communities Act (HB 1287).

I bring a unique perspective to this committee and my lived experience is a testament to why this bill is urgent and necessary. I was born and raised in Howard County, where I lived for 45 years. Moving to West Baltimore has shown me the stark reality of the difference between a "good" environment and a "bad" one. In Howard County, clean air is a given; in West Baltimore, it is a fight. And that simply isn't fair.

West Baltimore, including my home at Harvey Johnson Towers, has suffered from decades of redlining that intentionally concentrated industrial pollution in our backyards while stripping away investment. This tale of two Marylands is a tale of deliberate injustice and a direct result of state decision making. Having lived in both counties, I see how state policy protects the health of some while allowing others to live in "sacrifice zones." Health should not be determined by a zip code, or any other factor for that matter.

The cumulative burdens add up both in real time and over time. We don't just deal with one factory or one type of pollution. We deal with the combined weight of decades of industrial pollution and systemic neglect. And as a result, our children suffer some of the worst asthma rates in the country.

The CHERISH Act is vital because it finally forces the state to acknowledge these cumulative impacts before granting new permits. It also allows communities to be a part of the decision making processes that affect them. It is a necessary step toward undoing the environmental harm caused by discriminatory housing and industrial practices. I am asking you to ensure that West Baltimore residents have the same right to a healthy environment that I experienced for 45 years in Howard County. Please support the CHERISH Act.

Sincerely,

Angel Cook

Advocate, Activist, Abolitionist