

Testimony Supporting HB1287– Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (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). 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 the Greater Baltimore region. 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. 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, among other priority pollutants, are emitted during energy generation – in Maryland, these emissions are governed by Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs). CPCNs are the permits needed by new or expanding power plants (covered by HB1287).

Currently, many communities in Maryland are surrounded by dozens of stationary pollution sources, and thus experience air pollution burdens many times higher than considered safe by EPA or WHO standards. This has real impacts for older adults in Maryland. For instance, in Baltimore City and in North Anne Arundel County where I conduct my research, **certain power generation sources permitted under CPCNs emit sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), particulate matter (PM), carbon dioxide (CO₂), and mercury (Hg) emissions, resulting in significant public health harms such as cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases**. Many of my research participants who live on power plant fencelines face resultant chronic health concerns, such as lung and blood cancers, which they attribute to their proximity to these sites. The CHERISH Our Communities Act (HB1268 and HB1287) will take reasonable action to protect the health of these most vulnerable populations. It will apply **only specific overburdened and underserved geographic regions**. HB1287 will also only apply to polluting energy generation, which includes very few projects each year – resulting in a **low demand upon the PSC**, but significant benefit for Marylanders.

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

Maryland Department of the Environment (HB1268) and the Public Service Commission (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

*MPhil Health Medicine and Society; MA Hons Social Anthropology
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>

Power plant emissions:

American Public Health Association. 2018. *The Public Health Impact of Energy Policy in the United States*. <https://www.apha.org/policy-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-briefs/policy-database/2019/01/28/public-health-impact-of-energy-policy>.

EPA. 2026. *Power Plants and Neighboring Communities*. [https://www.epa.gov/power-sector/power-plants-and-neighboring-communities#:~:text=Burning%20fossil%20fuels%20at%20power,mercury%20\(Hg\)%2C%20and%20other%20pollutants](https://www.epa.gov/power-sector/power-plants-and-neighboring-communities#:~:text=Burning%20fossil%20fuels%20at%20power,mercury%20(Hg)%2C%20and%20other%20pollutants).

Tu et al. *Health damages and disparities from municipal and medical waste incineration in Baltimore, USA*. medRxiv [Preprint]. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2025.06.27.25330313>.