

## **Testimony in Support of HB 517-Emission Standards, Ambient Air Quality Standards and Solid Waste Management**

### **To the House Environment and Transportation Committee**

#### **Greetings**

My name is Robert Alex Stubblefield and I am a poet, lay minister, theologian, and activist-organizer with a variety of groups such as the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition, Black United Front of Moco, Moco Liberation Collective, DSA and a variety of other organizations. Just as important, I am a lifelong Maryland resident and I am writing in support of HB517, Emission Standards, Ambient Air Quality Standards and Solid Waste Management. My reasons are explained below.

The first reason why I am supporting this bill is because we are and have been in a climate crisis for some time. We are in urgent need to ensure that we as Marylanders can have a clean environment so future generations can enjoy and thrive. Unfortunately, given the current federal administration gutting environmental protections at every level, it is vital that Maryland and its localities step up and empower Marylanders to create local air pollution and solid waste management laws for their counties/municipalities that are more protective than the federal and state minimums. This is important because the bare minimum is no longer going to cut it. We have been out of time for a while now. What this bill will do is that it will make state law more clear to ensure localities can fulfill their duty to safeguard not only the health of the environment, but also the safety and welfare of their residents as necessary and appropriate.

The second reason why I am supporting this bill is because it will empower Marylanders. Given the current laws and regulations on the books, the way they are written creates confusion and it has, unfortunately created the opposite affect in which local clean air laws are at risk. What this has also done is that it makes it harder for localities to meet their own climate goals and has allowed for goals to be pushed back and delayed. This is problematic because current laws do not empower Marylanders. This bill will allow Marylanders to have a say and not only demand stronger laws written in clean language, but will also help communities defend themselves from polluters. This is very important because of a unfortunate history of environmental racism and classism because historically marginalized communities such as black and brown communities are always to feel the brunt of pollution and other environmental harms. This bill will ensure that there are stronger laws on the books especially given the most recent leak in the Potomac which will require years of cleanup.

The third reason is because we have a duty to be good stewards of the earth. As a lay minister and theologian, we have an obligation to be good stewards of the earth. That means from an environmental standpoint to ensure that our air is clean, our water is clean and safe to drink and grow food and that waste is not poisoning our communities. Local governments can and must have the power to protect their residents when the state and federal are either slow to act or being hostile. We have that duty also as constituents to ensure that we have the say and power to fight for these laws but to also punish polluters be they private or governmental. This is a moral imperative and a necessary one.

In closing, I support this bill and we need it now more than ever.

Thank you