

JEN TERRASA
Legislative District 13
Howard County

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Election Law

Labor

Oversight Committee on Personnel



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 18, 2026

To: The Honorable Marc A. Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Delegate Jen Terrasa
District 13, Howard County

Re: Sponsor Testimony in Support of HB 517 Emission Standards, Ambient Air Quality Standards, and Solid Waste Management - Local Authority

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present HB 517, a reintroduction of HB 1058 from 2025, which clarifies the Maryland General Assembly's intent that local governments can adopt their own air and waste ordinances as long as they are no less strict than federal and state minimums.

In Maryland, the Environment Code (Sections 2-104, 9-502, 9-503, and 9-716) empowers local governments to create their own air and waste regulations. However, multiple court decisions have raised questions about the clarity of the General Assembly's intent. Clarification is needed to ensure local regulations can be enacted without fear of costly litigation.

Local jurisdictions deserve the flexibility to tailor environmental standards to meet the needs of their communities. Counties understand the importance of a healthy environment and have often been at the forefront of achieving better environmental outcomes. Allowing local governments to tailor regulations promotes more effective solutions. HB 517 clarifies the General Assembly's intent and reinforces that counties have the authority to adopt stricter air quality standards beyond federal and state requirements. Local governments

are best positioned to address the unique needs of their communities, which can vary significantly across Maryland.

Concerns about conflicting regulations across jurisdictions fail to recognize the benefits of local autonomy in addressing specific environmental and waste management needs. Under the bill, the Maryland Department of the Environment will provide clear information on local rights and regulations via its website, ensuring consistency and minimizing confusion.

As we've seen federal environmental regulations altered or nullified in the past year, HB 517 helps ensure that local governments can step into the vacuum. This bill strikes a balance between local control and statewide oversight, fostering transparency and supporting communities.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB 517.