

# **Abigail Ulman HB1287 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Abigail Ulman

Position: FAV

**Testimony Supporting HB1287**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**March 13, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

As a Baltimore City resident of District 43A and an environmental health professional, I am writing to express my **strong** support of HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act applying to CPCNs for polluting energy generation.

I am a climate and environmental health professional with over 7 years of experience in the environmental justice and public health fields. I hold a Masters of Public Health in Environmental & Occupational Health from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a Bachelors of Science in environmental policy from Georgetown University. I have extensive experience supporting community organizations with environmental justice initiatives and movements in both Baltimore and Washington, DC. **Based on my academic and professional research on effective tactics, strategies, and processes that academic researchers can use to uplift environmental justice in communities and support environmental justice movements, I strongly support the passage of the CHERISH Our Communities Act.**

By considering the cumulative impacts of pollution in the most marginalized, at-risk, and vulnerable neighborhoods in the city that have been ignored and polluted in for decades, the CHERISH Our Communities Act will begin to repair the harm caused and protect public health from those who have contributed the least to pollution in Maryland. Today, Black, Brown, immigrant, rural, and working-class neighborhoods are forced to bear much of the burden of pollution in the Maryland. As a resident of Baltimore, Maryland, I have seen firsthand the impact a lack of a cumulative impacts law has on Black and Brown communities in Baltimore. With my work organizing and conducting research with the South Baltimore Community Land Trust, I have seen the damage a lack of cumulative impacts legislation has done in South Baltimore and the harm it has caused to families. With a trash incinerator, a medical waste incinerator, a landfill, multiple industrial waste processing sites, and the largest open-air coal pile in the country located adjacent to homes and communities – with the coal pile sitting half a mile from the elementary school and recreation center – South Baltimore residents, predominantly Black, Brown, and working-class, experience disproportionately higher rates of asthma, cancer, and respiratory issues than their counterparts in whiter, more affluent areas of the city. The healthcare cost burden associated with the negative public health impacts of a lack of a cumulative impacts law is over \$58 million per year. As such, a central demand of environmental justice colleagues in South Baltimore is the passing of the CHERISH Our Communities Act that would enable the closing of existing polluting industries in the South Baltimore peninsula and prevent new, harmful industries from continuing to be cited next to poor, Black and Brown communities. **Without policies and laws that consider the compounding impacts of pollution on these neighborhoods, predominantly Black, Brown, rural, and immigrant neighborhoods in Maryland will continue to be dumped on.**

**The CHERISH Our Communities Act will create a much stricter permitting process for polluting facilities in the District and close many of the existing permitting loopholes that allow facilities to operate next to communities and harm residents' health, especially Black, Brown, and immigrant residents.** This bill applies CHERISH Our Communities Act principles to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, which are the permits needed by new or expanding power plants or other facilities putting energy onto the grid. (Existing power plants that pollute must maintain an operating air pollution permit issued by MDE that will be subject to HB1268.) It is targeted in geography: it applies only

to parts of the state that are burdened by disproportionate pollution. It is targeted in scope: it will apply only to polluting energy generation (not wind, solar, or geothermal), meaning that it will apply to very few projects each year and won't strain state resources to administer. This bill prevents new polluting energy generation from being built **if** the Public Service Commission determines, through a deliberative public process with public input, that allowing it to be built would contribute to a **disproportionate** pollution and health burden on the nearby community. No one should be in favor of forcing environmental justice communities that are already overburdened by pollution to host even more pollution to put more electricity on our regional grid to benefit communities far away – or data center power demands.

Thank you, Delegates, for holding a hearing on such an important issue. **I strongly urge you to vote Yes on the CHERISH Our Communities Act to protect the environment and public health for Maryland residents and ensure Black, Brown, immigrant, and working-class neighborhoods in Maryland are no longer treated as dumping grounds. Make Maryland a leader in environmental justice nationwide and an example that other states and municipalities, such as Washington, DC, can use as a standard for future environmental justice and cumulative impacts laws.**

# **IPL-DMV FAV Testimony for HB 1287.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andrea Orozco

Position: FAV

**Testimony Supporting HB 1287**  
**House Environment & Transportation Committee**  
**March 6th, 2026**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**



Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa), working with a thousand congregations in Maryland, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Across Maryland, we see a painful and persistent reality: some communities – often low-income communities and communities of color – live with a disproportionate share of pollution. Families worship, learn, work, and raise children in the shadow of highways, industrial facilities, and incinerators.

**Our faith traditions teach us that every person is created with inherent dignity and that we are called to protect the health of our neighbors and our common home.** When additional pollution is proposed for communities already overburdened, justice requires accountability.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act brings core moral values into our energy siting process. This legislation requires that applications for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for certain generating stations located in at-risk census tracts include a Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) report. By using Maryland’s Environmental Justice (EJ) tool and clearly identifying cumulative environmental and public health stressors, the bill ensures that decision-makers and the public have a complete picture of existing burdens before new ones are added.

**For too long, permitting decisions have evaluated projects in isolation, without fully accounting for the cumulative impacts communities already experience.** The result has been a pattern in which the same neighborhoods repeatedly absorb new sources of pollution. This bill changes that by requiring the Public Service Commission to determine whether a proposed generating station would cause or contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors that exceed those borne elsewhere in the State. If it would, the Commission must deny the application, unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate a genuine public interest for the affected community.

Importantly, the bill does not apply to wind, solar, or geothermal generating stations. In doing so, it aligns Maryland’s energy future with cleaner technologies while protecting communities from further harm caused by more polluting facilities.

The CHERISH Act also strengthens transparency and public participation. By requiring clear notice, posting of BURDEN reports, and public hearings that address both the application and the associated environmental impacts, the bill affirms the right of communities to be informed and heard.

This bill recognizes that “public convenience and necessity” cannot be separated from public health, environmental integrity, and justice.

We urge you to stand with Maryland’s impacted communities to advance equity in our energy system and to give HB 1287 a favorable report.

**HB1287\_Andy Dieguez\_Fav\_CHERISH ACT .pdf**

Uploaded by: Andy Dieguez

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Andy Dieguez

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Andy Dieguez, and I am an 8th-grade student at Hampstead Hill Academy. I live in Baltimore City with my family, including my younger brother Manny, who has asthma and autism. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB1287 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Many children in our community, including my brother, face serious health challenges because of poor air quality. Polluted air can trigger asthma attacks, worsen respiratory illnesses, and make daily life more difficult for families. Frontline communities like ours are often the most affected by environmental pollution, yet we receive the least protections and resources to address these issues.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act is an important step toward correcting these inequities. This bill ensures that the Maryland Department of the Environment considers the real impacts of pollution on communities that are overburdened and vulnerable. By supporting this legislation, decision-makers can help ensure that every child has the opportunity to live, learn, and grow in a safe and healthy environment.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of HB1287. Passing this bill will protect the health of children and families across Baltimore City and create a cleaner, safer future for our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Andy Dieguez

**HB1278 CHERISH PSC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Bryan Dunning

Position: FAV



March 13, 2026

**Testimony of Bryan Dunning  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Center for Progressive Reform**

**Before the Maryland House of Delegates' Environment and Transportation Committee  
Requesting a Favorable Report on HB1278: Certificate of Public Convenience and  
Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERSH Our Communities Act)**

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and the members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB1278 (the CHERISH Act) on behalf of the Center for Progressive Reform. The Center is a research and advocacy organization that focuses on advancing good governance and achieving equitable public protections. The CHERISH Act requires that the Maryland Public Services Commission (MD PSC) review Certificates for Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for certain types of polluting generation facilities to evaluate the impact said facilities will have upon disproportionately impacted communities. The Cherish Act is a critical step for protecting historically impacted communities from some of the most intensive sources of pollution contemplated in the state, and is a necessary step on the road to Maryland fulfilling its longstanding promises to not just advance, but achieve, environmental justice in the state. For the following reasons, the Center for Progressive Reform requests a **Favorable** report on HB1278.

**History and Timeliness**

Environmental justice considerations as relates to the siting of polluting power plants in the state of Maryland are longstanding issues in the state, with polluting generation facilities tending to be built in clusters in communities near to existing facilities and contributing to significant pollution burdens.

A historic example of this is the cluster of gas generation facilities in and around Brandywine in Prince George's County, which has four gas generation facilities within 13 miles of the community of around 11,000 people. Although these facilities were built to serve Maryland's

broader energy demands, the onus of the pollution from these facilities falls squarely on the shoulders of community.

Although the late 2010s and early 2020s largely saw proposed development of renewable non-polluting facilities in the state, in recent years, Maryland is again turning to polluting generation sources to meet increased load demand (largely driven by regional build out of large-load facilities, notably data centers).

It is, perhaps, unsurprising given the history of where such polluting generation facilities are sited, that the first applications under the expedited CPCN process set up by 2025's Next Generation Energy Act for "dispatchable" generation, were located in Brandywine (Alpha Generation LLC's application for to expand the gas generation Keys energy center)<sup>1</sup> and Aberdeen MD, another disproportionately impacted community (two gas generation facilities to be constructed by Constellation Energy).<sup>2</sup> The Constellation projects have been approved for an expedited CPCN.

The CHERISH Act is a necessary law to ensure that environmental justice considerations as relates to the increased burden from such projects on historically disproportionately impacted communities are considered in such applications, and empower MD PSC to act upon them. Doing so is necessary to ensure that Maryland, in its return to siting gas facilities, does not continue to place to onus upon these communities in its desire to expand generation that will broadly serve residents of the state – or more narrowly, the demand of large load interests.

### **CHERISH is limited in scope and is in line with existing EJ procedures**

CHERISH does not broadly increase the administrative burden on either MD PSC, the Maryland Power Plant Research Program (PPRP), or on energy developers. The development of a BURDEN report to identify the cumulative impacts of a new polluting facility applies only for polluting facilities. Clean generation (solar, wind, geothermal, all of which fall under Maryland's clean energy development policy priorities) are not impacted by the bill. Neither, for that matter, does it apply to polluting facilities seeking to site projects in communities not historically subject to disproportionate burdens.

CHERISH also slots into existing environmental review conducted in the pre-application and application phases of a CPCN. The BURDEN report describes the existing landscape of pollution and the potential additional contributions to environmental and public health burdens from the proposed facility. It also is complementary to existing regulatory requirements for

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<sup>1</sup> Alpha Generation, LLC – Dispatchable Generation and Large Capacity Energy Resource Program Proposal. PC 74 (October 31, 2025)

<sup>2</sup> Constellation Energy Generation LLC – Dispatchable Generation and Large Capacity Energy Resource Program Proposal 1. PC74 (October 31, 2025); Constellation Energy Generation LLC – Dispatchable Generation and Large Capacity Energy Resource Program Proposal 2. PC74 (October 31, 2025); *note* – Constellation's applications redact the location of the site, but [subsequent reporting](#) place the facilities near to the existing Perryman generation facility in Aberdeen MD.

polluting CPCN applications as relates to disclosures and public notice.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, CHERISH takes the crucial next step to give MD PSC the authority to act on this information to protect disproportionately impacted communities from further harm.

### **Conclusion**

CHERISH empowers MDE to act and provides a pathway forward for Maryland to meet the challenge of its long promise to make good on advancing environmental justice in the state. As such the Center for Progressive Reform requests a **Favorable** report on HB1278.

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g. COMAR 20.79.01.04

**CEJSC Letter of Support SB0780\_HB1287.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Camille Burke

Position: FAV

# MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee  
251 Taylor House Office Building Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 780/ HB 1287 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act) on behalf of the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC). The CEJSC was established in 2001 by Executive Order on January 1, 2001 and is now statutorily codified under § 1-701 of the Environment Article of the Md. Ann. Code. The Commission is charged with:

- Advising the State government agencies on EJ.
- Analyzing the effectiveness of State and local government laws and policies to address issues of EJ and sustainable communities.
- Coordinating with the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC) on the issues of EJ and sustainable communities.
- Developing criteria to assess what communities in MD may be experiencing EJ issues.
- Recommending options for addressing EJ issues to the Governor and the General Assembly; including prioritized areas of the State that need immediate attention.

The CEJSC is committed to doing our part to ensure that environmental laws and programs protect the environment as well as the health and well-being of all Marylanders. Accordingly, we included the following recommendation in our 2025 annual report:

- CEJSC recommends passage of legislation that aligns state environmental permitting with people's lived experience by giving MDE the authority to condition, modify, or deny certain types of permits (including new, expansion, and renewal) in areas of the state where there is a concentration of pollution, thereby acknowledging the impact of existing burdens in overburdened communities across the state.

The Moore-Miller Administration's Transition report included this recommendation (2023, p. 27) and the CEJSC has included similar recommendations for at least the last two years in a row. The state's permitting process currently does not adequately consider existing pollution sources, health, or socioeconomic factors, even though the state of the science has demonstrated these indicators do influence community health and the community's ability to respond to the historical accumulation of pollution sources. Other states have passed and are passing sweeping environmental justice permitting legislation. The CEJSC received a thorough presentation from national expert and former Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Environmental Justice at the Environmental Protection Agency, Charles Lee, on this topic in 2024.

SB 780/HB 1287 directly addresses our recommendation and would give the Public Service Commission (PSC) the authority to consider cumulative impacts in the issuance of certain permits relevant for energy generating stations in areas of the state most overburdened by pollution. Through a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report provided by the permit applicant, the PSC will have important information about existing pollution and environmental concerns in the area around the proposed permitted facility they can use to make a decision about the permit.

CEJSC is charged with examining EJ issues and sustainable community opportunities that may be associated with public health, safety, economy, government, or other issues relating to EJ and sustainable communities. By mandating rigorous, data-grounded requirements for generating stations in at risk areas, this bill moves the state toward a posture of active protection. This bill and its companion that applies to MDE permits represents an appropriate and necessary next step for environmental justice in Maryland, building on efforts that created the MDEnviroScreen mapping tool and providing some EJ information as part of the environmental permitting process. This shift is essential to ensure that Maryland's energy future is built on a foundation of clean air, land, and water for all.

Sincerely,

Camille Burke

Chair of the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities

**HB1287 \_Carlos Alvarez\_Fav\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carlos Alvarez

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Carlos Alvarez

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Carlos Alvarez, I am a student at High Point High School. I live in Silver Spring, in District 47B. I am a part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to you today to express my support for SB780 CHERISH Our Communities Act.

The reason for this message is to ask you to support HB1287 - CHERISH Our Community Act because it protects the environment and also our health. Pollution makes diseases like asthma and other respiratory problems worse.

I also have a classmate who suffers from asthma, and I have seen how poor air quality affects him. That is why I believe HB1287 - CHERISH Our Community Act, is important, because it would help reduce pollution and protect people like him. A cleaner environment means a better quality of life for everyone.

The CHERISH Act helps improve living conditions by protecting clean air and public health. Clean air is essential for people to live healthier lives, especially in communities that have been exposed to high levels of pollution.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and consider this important issue. I truly hope you will support and vote yes for HB1287 - CHERISH Our Community Act, for the health and well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

Carlos Alvarez

# **HB1287 CHERISH Testimony - Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carlos Sanchez

Position: FAV

**Testimony Supporting HB1287**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**March 13, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Carlos Sanchez, and I am a resident of Baltimore City and a member of the South Baltimore Community Land Trust, a grassroots nonprofit organization. I strongly support HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act as applied to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) for polluting energy generation.

I live in a community surrounded by major roadways, industrial facilities, and other pollution sources. These impacts are real: they appear in our schools, homes, and hospitals as higher rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic health conditions that disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color.

HB1287 ensures that new or expanded polluting energy facilities—like fossil fuel power plants—cannot be built in overburdened communities if they would worsen disproportionate pollution and health burdens. The Public Service Commission would consider cumulative impacts and provide meaningful opportunities for community input before permitting decisions are made.

The bill is targeted and practical: it applies only to communities already overburdened by pollution and only to polluting energy generation (not wind, solar, or geothermal). It affects very few projects each year and does not place undue burdens on state resources. For existing facilities, operating air pollution permits issued by MDE remain subject to review, allowing tools to reduce cumulative harm.

For too long, communities like mine have carried the weight of pollution without a voice. HB1287 provides a data-driven framework to protect public health where it is needed most while maintaining a focused and practical approach.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB1287.

Sincerely,  
Carlos Sanchez  
South Baltimore Community Land Trust

**HB1287\_Casandra De Leon Cabrera\_Fav\_CHERISH ACT.p**

Uploaded by: Casandra De Leon Cabrera

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Casandra De Leon Cabrera

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Cassandra de Leon, and I have been a resident of Hattsville District 47 for the past 16 years. I am a high school student in Prince George's County, and I am deeply committed to advocating for environmental justice and healthier communities.

I am writing today in strong support of HB1287 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is personal to me and my neighborhood. We have poor air quality. Too often, families like mine live in neighborhoods already burdened by pollution, yet we continue to face new environmental risks without adequate protections.

Communities like ours have been overlooked for too long. We are exposed to multiple sources of pollution that accumulate over time and create serious health risks for children and neighbors. The CHERISH Our Communities Act is a critical step toward ensuring that Maryland fully considers the cumulative impacts of pollution when reviewing permits and making decisions that affect our communities.

By supporting this bill, you are helping protect families who are already facing environmental and health challenges. You are also taking an important step toward ensuring that every Maryland child, regardless of their zip code, has the opportunity to grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1287 and stand with families like mine who deserve clean air, healthier neighborhoods, and stronger protections for our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Casandra De Leon Cabrera

Cassandra de Leon  
Hyattsville Maryland  
District 47

My name is Cassandra, I'm a part of Chispa Maryland Youth Leadership Academy.

I am writing this letter to you as a constituent from District 47. To speak out about my concerns on children who have asthma and the air pollution. I care about this issue because children or people that have asthma have to struggle with a lot of issues and seeing how our air is being affected. The CHERISH Act, can help the community have a better life because when the air is not clean we have many health problems. Asthma is one issue: missing school days, spending money on medicine, etc

Respectfully ask you that you can take action to help it with the issue. Thank you for your time and for representing our community.

Appreciate your service and hope you will consider my news on this important matter.

Respectfully,

Cassandra de Leon

**LWVMD - HB 1287 - CHERISH (PSC).pdf**

Uploaded by: Casey Hunter

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**HB 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Linda T. Kohn, President**

**DATE: March 13, 2026**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports policies that protect our planet and promote public health. The League believes that advancing environmental justice is essential to creating an equitable and sustainable future for all Marylanders.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland **supports HB 1287**, the CHERISH Our Communities Act, which applies to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the Public Service Commission for new or expanded power plants or energy generation facilities. HB 1287 would prevent new polluting energy generation facilities from being built if the Commission determines that doing so would contribute to disproportionate pollution and health impacts for the nearby community.

This bill ensures that impacted communities have a voice in PSC permitting decisions through a public deliberation process. **HB 1287** applies only to areas in the state that are disproportionately burdened by pollution, and applies only to new or expanded polluting energy generation facilities. Therefore, this bill does not apply to wind, solar, or geothermal energy projects.

Overburdened and underserved communities - namely low-income communities and communities of color - disproportionately bear the brunt of pollution and its associated health impacts in our state. Projects that degrade air and water quality are often placed in overburdened and underserved census tracts, which perpetuates inequities in opportunity and health outcomes. **HB 1287** would work to protect these communities from further environmental injustice at the hands of the state's permitting process.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland **strongly urges a favorable report on HB 1287.**

**HB1287\_CPCN\_CHERISH\_Act.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



## TESTIMONY FOR HB1287

### Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

**Bill Sponsor:** Delegate Johnson, A.

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB1287 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

For decades, decisions made by the Department of the Environment have been made with the intent to facilitate the building of infrastructure rather than what was necessary for the public good. What those policies have left us with are areas of that state that are toxic to the residents who live there and never had a voice.

The CHERISH Act would realign the goals of the PSC to ensure that the infrastructure we do build (and renew permits for) would have safeguards for the residents of the state. It would require –

- Any new permit applications to include an Environmental Impact Statement and Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) Report
- MDE to conduct a public notice and review process for these permits
- MDE to prepare a final Existing BURDEN Report based on public comment and input from stakeholders
- MDE to determine whether issuing a permit would cause an increased potential for adverse impacts on the community
- MDE to make information about enforcement actions against permitted facilities in covered areas easily available online, and direct 25% of penalties from enforcement actions to the impacted communities

Our members look forward to having our primary environmental watchdog support the public needs in this manner. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

**HB1287\_Cynthia Escobar\_Fav\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cynthia Escobar

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** SB780 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Cinthia Escobar

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Cinthia Escobar, and I am an 11th grade student at Fairmont Heights School. I am a member of the Chispa Maryland Youth Leadership Academy. I live in Hyattsville with my family. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB1287 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Many children in our community face serious health challenges because of poor air quality. Pollution greatly affects people, especially children and older adults, pregnant mothers with chronic illnesses, and with the CHERISH Act, we can have a much better environment in the future.

I wrote this letter to look forward to your support because we need to continue to work together to have a state with good conditions for all residents. I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB780. Passing this bill will protect the health of children and families across Maryland and create a cleaner, safer future for our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectful,  
Cinthia Escobar

**HB1287\_Clara Gonzalez\_Fav\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Clara Gonzalez

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Clara Gonzalez

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Clara Gonzalez, and I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of HB1287 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act. I have lived in Baltimore’s zip code 21205 for the past eight years, where I have experienced firsthand the urgent need for environmental justice in our communities.

As a Promotora of Environmental Justice with CHISPA Maryland, a program of the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, I am committed to advocating for policies that protect our environment and prioritize the health and well-being of our families. As a mother of a child with asthma, the quality of the air we breathe is not just a policy issue—it is a daily concern that directly affects my child’s health and our family’s peace of mind.

In our neighborhood, many families are familiar with the sound of children struggling to breathe. The cumulative burden of pollution continues to impact our health and quality of life. HB1287 represents an important step toward ensuring that the Maryland Department of the Environment considers the real impacts of pollution on communities that have been historically overburdened.

As both a Promotora of Environmental Justice and a mother, I urge you to support HB1287 and take meaningful action to ensure cleaner air, healthier communities, and a more equitable future for all Maryland residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Clara Gonzalez

**Dawn Hegarty Favorable Testimony HB1287 HB1268.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dawn Hegarty

Position: FAV

**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

**HB1287\_JCRC\_Salganik.FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Singer

Position: FAV



**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Testimony:** House Bill 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)  
**Organization:** Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County, MD  
**Submitting:** Laura Salganik, Chair  
**Position:** FAVORABLE  
**Hearing Date:** March 13, 2026

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Committee Members:

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County is submitting this testimony in favor of HB 1287. As Jews, we are obligated to try and repair the world (tikkun olam) and by supporting this social justice bill, we demonstrate our commitment to advancing our Jewish values in the interest of protecting communities overburdened by pollution.

HB 1287 addresses both environmental justice and health issues. The legacy of racism underlies the location of power plants and has led to the disproportionate exposure to harmful pollution in the surrounding communities. Residents of Brandywine in Prince George’s County have four power plants and a years-long fight for their own right to breath clean air.

This bill would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) to include with the application baseline understanding of risk, disparities and environmental needs (BURDEN) report that describes and includes information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the Public Service Commission to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

Repeal of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mercury and Air Toxic (MAT) standards for power plants increases the need for a bill like CHERISH to protect the health of Marylanders. MAT standards saved \$33 million in health costs according to the EPA and now those safeguards will be gone.

HB 1287 will require the PSC to factor in health and environmental harms when issuing a CPCN in already overburdened communities. The weakening of EPA protections increases the need for CHERISH to protect these very communities, especially young children who grow up near power plants.

**We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 1287.**

# **EvelynHoon\_HB1287\_WrittenTestimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Evelyn Hoon

Position: FAV

**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 (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), particulate matter (PM), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), 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>.

**HB1287\_Felicita Cano\_Fav\_Cherish Act.pdf**

Uploaded by: Felicita Cano

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Felicita Cano

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Felicita Cano, and I have been a resident of Baltimore City's District 46 for the past five years. I am a mother of four children—one of whom lives with asthma—and I am deeply committed to advocating for environmental justice and healthier communities.

As a mother, there is nothing more frightening than watching your child struggle to breathe. Asthma attacks are not just medical events; they are moments filled with fear and uncertainty. I constantly worry about the air my children are breathing—at home, at school, and in our neighborhood. In many parts of Baltimore, families like mine are exposed to pollution from highways, industrial facilities, and other sources that contribute to poor air quality and higher asthma rates.

For too long, communities like District 46 have faced the cumulative impacts of environmental hazards without meaningful protection. Our neighborhoods often carry multiple burdens at the same time—air pollution, traffic emissions, and industrial activity—while lacking the resources to address the health consequences. This is not just an environmental issue; it is a public health and equity issue.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act is an important step toward protecting families like mine. By requiring the state to consider cumulative impacts before approving new permits, this bill helps prevent further harm to communities that are already overburdened. It ensures that no neighborhood continues to be treated as a dumping ground for pollution.

Every child deserves to grow up breathing clean air. Every parent deserves peace of mind knowing their child's health is being protected. I respectfully urge you to give HB1287 a favorable report and stand with families across Baltimore who are calling for fairness, accountability, and environmental justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Felicita Cano

**ECA testimony HB1287 - CHERISH (PSC).pdf**

Uploaded by: Frances Stewart

Position: FAV



HB1287 - SUPPORT  
Frances Stewart, MD  
Elders Climate Action Maryland  
[frances.stewart6@gmail.com](mailto:frances.stewart6@gmail.com)  
301-718-0446

HB1287 – Environmental Permits – Certificate of Public Convenience and  
Necessity – CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Meeting of the Environment and Transportation Committee

March 11, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Elders Climate Action Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Elders Climate Action is a nationwide organization devoted to ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and future generations have a world in which they can thrive. The Maryland Chapter has members across the state.

Climate change is the main focus of our work, but we recognize air pollution as one of the greatest threats to our health. Also, climate change and air pollution share root causes.

Air pollution and its deadly effects are not evenly distributed. Many communities face much higher burdens and significantly worse health outcomes. Those communities are disproportionately underserved and have more vulnerable populations.

Fossil fuel burning power plants bring with them a host of environmental problems, including emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>, which have multiple negative impacts on our health. Coal-fired plants are also major emitters of mercury, which is particularly dangerous to children. The Environmental Protection Agency

recently repealed the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard for power plants, which increases the hazard.

Power plants are not evenly distributed throughout the state. They are often built near other polluting facilities, even other power plants. The effects of redlining are still apparent in Maryland today and often lead to disproportionate pollution burdens in communities of color.

For example, the residents of Brandywine in Prince George's County are 67% black. Their community is 67% black. In 2016, they had four power plants in their area and had to fight the addition of a fifth<sup>1</sup>.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act (Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Our Shared Health) is well named. It will address a critical gap in Maryland's environmental protection system. SB780 will require the Public Service Commission to factor in health and environmental harms when considering a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity in already overburdened communities. It is a logical and needed complement to HB1268, which requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to consider cumulative impact when issuing permits.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable report on HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Deaton, "In Maryland, One Community Is Taking a Stand against Environmental Racism," *Grist*, July 27, 2016, <https://grist.org/justice/in-maryland-one-community-is-taking-a-stand-against-environmental-racism/>.

**HB1287\_Gabriela Ibarra\_FAV\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gabriela Ibarra

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Gabriela Ibarra

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Gabriela Ibarra, I am 16 years old, and I am an 11th grade student at Bladensburg High School. I live in Riverdale Park, in District 22. I am a part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to you today to express my support for HB1287 - CHERISH Our Communities Act environment

I'm writing to share my thoughts on CHERISH Our Communities Act. I believe this legislation is important because it can help make our communities cleaner and healthier.

This issue matters to me because environmental conditions directly affect people's health. Cleaner air could help reduce asthma-related problems, which is something some of my friends struggle with and that can cause students to miss school.

I respectfully ask that you consider supporting HB1287 - CHERISH Act. so communities can benefit from its impact. Thank you for your time and for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Gabriela Ibarra

# **Testimony on House Bill 1287.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gita Lefstein

Position: FAV

## Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable

### SB1287 – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

#### Environment and Transportation Committee

March 6, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gita Lefstein, and I am a resident of Baltimore County, Maryland. I am writing in support of HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

I attended a meeting in Baltimore County about a possible data center construction in the Woodlawn area a few months ago. I was shocked to find out that Baltimore County has limited the areas where data centers can be built, and the limits are not based on what areas are already overburdened with polluting industries. There should be limits on where data centers can be built, and also on where energy generation facilities can be built, if they will contribute to pollution in the area, but those limits should be based on fairness. Energy generating facilities which pollute should not be permitted to be built in places where there is already a high concentration of pollution. Clean energy sources, such as solar, wind, and battery should be encouraged.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB1287**.

Thank you.

**cherish bill greg (003).pdf**

Uploaded by: Gregory Sliviak

Position: FAV

Gregory Sliviak

[sliviakswelding@comcast.net](mailto:sliviakswelding@comcast.net)

**House Bills 1287 and 1268 – SUPPORT**

**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (HB 1287)**

**And Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and  
Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration  
for Improving Shared Health (HB 1268)**

**(CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gregory Sliviak. I am a resident of rock creek. I am a second generation union Ironworker. I've spent my career erecting steel in and around Baltimore city and Maryland throughout the late 70s until 2007. I worked on Convention centers, stadiums, hotels and numerous high rises. On the weekends, I worked on almost every chemical plant in Balt. as well as many hours in Sparrows Point steel mill. I have witnessed many environmental atrocities and violations. Most plants have a discharge pipe running directly into the bay. There are way too many pollutants to name them all. Allied Chemical in Balt city was one of the largest. In operation for over 150 years they dumped chromium and arsenic and many other poisons into many areas of the harbor. Some of these contaminants were used as fill dirt under parking lots and sidewalks still used today. Some employees had holes through the middle of their nose to which they received a \$5000.00 check. A few times after working on weekends my shoes would get wet and fall apart during the week. This was just from walking in various powders around the plants. These dusts were always airborne and washed away in runoff as well. It has always been cheaper to pay fines than remediate the problem. One time I witnessed Greenpeace pull up to the sludge pond at Sparrows Point steel mill and pump the sludge onto Bethlehem Blvd to prove a point before they were arrested by the Coastguard. Sparrows Point was the largest steel mill in the United States. Under every giant mill building is a trough or pipe leading to the first sludge pond. Then it was pumped up hill to a holding dike-pond until it was higher than high tide in the bay. Then a 12 ft. overflow pipe spilled the contamination into the bay 24 hours a day. I also witnessed a barge of 55 gal drums full of PCBs being dumped into the bay. Once I was working at Brandon Shores during nightshift I overheard a foreman laughing when he told a coworker to burn out the stacks after dark because it would look like a giant mushroom cloud and would cause a stir. I have witnessed many things first hand and I am certain

every river in this upper Chesapeake Bay has its own unique set of poison sediments. Some are semi-contained by years of sediments. Most area residents don't know there are limits on how many crabs you should eat and also fish because of pollutants. Watermen have had amputations and some have died of infections from rockfish! I really appreciate anyone taking the time to read this, and I plead we do not go backwards in protecting our environment.

Anne Arundel County and the surrounding area cannot take any further degradation of the environment, which includes the air, soil and waterways!

Senate Bills SB 0780 and SB 0781 proposed in this legislative session will create the necessary regulatory infrastructure to implement a measured and cost-effective approach to correcting the burden of cumulative pollution in Maryland's most overburdened communities and it will give overburdened communities a voice in the process.

**I strongly support HB 1287 and HB 1286**

Sincerely,

Gregory Sliviak

[sliviakswelding@comcast.net](mailto:sliviakswelding@comcast.net)

Rock Creek

Pasadena, MD 21122

# **HB1287– Certificate of Public Convenience and Nece**

Uploaded by: HoCo Climate Action Organization

Position: FAV



[HoCoClimateAction.org](http://HoCoClimateAction.org)  
Howard County, Maryland

**Testimony: HB1287– Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**  
**Hearing Date: March 13, 2026**  
**Bill Sponsor: Delegate A. Johnson**  
**Committee: Environment and Transportation**  
**Submitting: Shari Glenn for Howard County Climate Action**  
**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Committee Members,

[HoCo Climate Action](http://HoCoClimateAction.org) is a [350.org](http://350.org) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. We are also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). Our organization works with residents and ally organizations to promote a safe climate and clean energy future. Specifically, we have worked extensively on clean energy and on building electrification to help Maryland achieve its ambitious climate goals, including net-zero emissions.

We urge you to vote favorably on HB1287. HB1287 would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk area to include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report describing and including information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the PSC to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

HB1287 will require the PSC to factor in health and environmental harms when issuing a CPCN in already overburdened communities. The weakening of EPA protections under the current administration increases the need for CHERISH to protect these very communities and especially the young children who grow up near power plants. For these reasons we urge a favorable vote in committee on HB1287.

For these reasons, we **support** HB1287 and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report.

Howard County Climate Action  
Submitted by Shari Glenn, Steering and Advocacy Committee  
[www.HoCoClimateAction.org](http://www.HoCoClimateAction.org)  
[HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com](mailto:HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com)

# **HB1287\_FAV\_Iman\_Habib.pdf**

Uploaded by: Iman Habib

Position: FAV



# PROGRESSIVE MARYLAND

P.O. Box 7595, Largo MD 20792

ProgressiveMaryland.org

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**Bill Title:** [HB1287](#) Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

**Position:** SUPPORT (FAV)

**To:** Environment and Transportation Committee

**From:** Iman Habib, Climate Policy Analyst on behalf of Progressive Maryland

**Date:** March 11, 2026

Greetings Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

My name is Iman Habib, Climate Policy Analyst for Progressive Maryland, a member-led, power-building organization that centers working class voices as we tackle a wide range of issues, including environmental justice. We have over 125,000 members spanning across Maryland with significant bases in Baltimore City, Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, and Harford counties, as well as the Eastern Shore. **Progressive Maryland is in strong support of HB1287- Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act).**

This bill ensures that the state considers the environmental and health impact on communities living in close proximity to proposed energy generation facilities. From our work on the ground, we hear member stories everyday about the cumulative burdens imposed onto them by surrounding industries.

To put this into perspective, the Baltimore City neighborhoods of Cherry Hill, Westport, and Brooklyn have overall Environmental Justice scores of 99.7, 100, and 98.4, respectively—some of the highest in the state of Maryland. This means that these communities have a higher pollution burden than at least 98% of other areas, clearly demonstrating the disproportionate environmental and health effects on these residents. Specifically, Cherry Hill has an EJ score of 95 for power plant proximity, indicating that it is placed in closer proximity to power plants than 95% of other areas in the state.

These are not mere datapoints—they are livelihoods and stories of real people. We personally have spoken with members who have developed cancer; whose entire families in their neighborhood block died of cancer; who were diagnosed with osteoporosis and other chronic diseases after continued exposure to the pollutants and toxic substances from surrounding facilities.

CPCNs are issued to public utilities for construction of infrastructure that is “essential” for the “public” good—it is only ethically and morally sound to then factor in the “public” perspective into these decisions. By “cherishing” our communities’ lived experiences, perspectives, and values, we can truly expect meaningful change with tangible and positive outcomes for Marylanders. **I am urging the Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on HB1287.**

# **HB1287 FAV Gross SWASC**

Uploaded by: Jada Gross

Position: FAV

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1287**  
**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity BURDEN Analysis**  
**(CHERISH our Communities Act)**  
*Environment and Transportation Committee*  
**March 13, 2026**

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 1287**, which will require entities seeking to construct generating stations (excluding solar, wind, and geothermal) within 1.5 miles of environmentally overburdened census tracts to apply for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN). Such applications must include a report of the Baseline Understanding of Risks, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (i.e., BURDEN report). The bill also alters the existing notice requirements related to CPCN applications for fossil fuel energy generators. **This bill will empower the Public Service Commission (PSC) to assess, approve or deny applications based on the harms that proposed projects may inflict on nearby communities.**

**HB 1287 will help protect vulnerable Marylanders in communities already experiencing compounded health inequities because of industrial development by codifying environmental justice in Maryland’s infrastructure decision-making process.** The existing Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity process evaluates environmental effects, but it does not mandate an assessment of whether a new facility would compound existing pollution burdens and health disparities within a defined area. Without this requirement, projects may be approved even when they intensify inequities. As a result, industrial and fossil fuel facilities are often concentrated in communities that already experience elevated asthma rates and proximity to multiple pollution sources.<sup>1</sup> In Baltimore, for example, neighborhoods near heavy industrial activity experience significantly higher asthma and respiratory illness hospitalization rates than other areas of the city.<sup>2</sup> Better standards for CPCN applications, as outlined in HB 1287, can curb the pattern of compounding health inequities in marginalized communities and improve the quality of life for many of Maryland’s residents.

The Maryland Environmental Justice Tool was developed to measure pollution burden, environmental effects, and population vulnerability across census tracts.<sup>3</sup> These frameworks recognize that some communities face disproportionate environmental risks. Without legislation like HB 1287, however, these analytical tools can’t do more than describe the issue: a cumulative concentration of environmental hazards, including industrial pollution, traffic emissions, extreme heat exposure, and legacy contamination in marginalized neighborhoods. **Maryland needs legislation that does more than identify the problem. HB 1287 closes this gap by requiring applicants to analyze cumulative Environmental Justice (EJ) Scores before approval is granted, thereby aligning regulatory practice with Maryland’s stated environmental justice commitments.**

**HB 1287 would help Maryland live up to its commitment to equal environmental protection.** Environmental Article §1-701 affirms Maryland’s commitment to providing equal protection from environmental and public health hazards regardless of race, income, culture, or social status.<sup>4</sup> Yet climate and pollution harms are unevenly distributed along socioeconomic and racial lines, with extreme heat exposure and air pollution burdens concentrated in historically marginalized communities.<sup>5,6</sup> Maryland’s heat-related illness surveillance reports document rising emergency room visits during heat waves, particularly among older adults and low-income residents.<sup>7</sup> These data confirm that environmental and public health burdens are not evenly distributed across the state. Clearly, more is needed to meet Maryland’s commitment to equal protection under law.

**Marylanders expect their government to uphold its own commitments to environmental justice, and they expect corporations seeking to do business here to meet that same standard.** HB 1287 will empower the PSC to hold energy developers accountable by ensuring that no new facility is approved without a full accounting of the burdens it would impose on already-overburdened communities. Marylanders want legislation that takes these harms seriously. In fact, according to a representative sample, **most Marylanders report that their opinions of their legislators would improve if they supported stronger environmental protections for communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and industrial development.**<sup>8</sup>

Ensuring that infrastructure decisions account for the full burden already borne by overburdened communities is not only a matter of sound policy, it is a matter of basic equity, public health, and existing commitments to equal protection under law. For these reasons, **Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 1287.**

*Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.*

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Department of the Environment. *Maryland Environmental Justice Tool*.

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/EnvironmentalJustice>

<sup>2</sup> Kelly, L. & Burkhart, K. (2017). *Asthma and Air Pollution in Baltimore City*. Environmental Integrity Project.

<https://environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Baltimore-Asthma.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Maryland Department of the Environment. *EJ Screening and Mapping Tool Documentation*.

<sup>4</sup> Maryland Code, Environment Article §1-701 (Environmental Justice).

<sup>5</sup> Coelho et al. (2025). *Global socioeconomic disparities in exposure to extreme heat*.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-025-04075-3>

<sup>6</sup> Bloomberg School of Public Health (2025). *Air Pollution in Baltimore’s Curtis Bay Community Linked to Nearby Coal Terminal Activity*. <https://hub.jhu.edu/2025/07/21/baltimore-curtis-bay-air-pollution-coal-terminal/>

<sup>7</sup> Maryland Department of Health. (2025). *Heat-Related Illness Surveillance Summary Report*.

<sup>8</sup> Gonzales Poll. (2024). Infrastructure investments. <https://ccanactionfund.org/media/Gonzales-Poll-CCAN-Infrastructure-Investments.pdf>

**HB1287 \_Jaylyn Manzanares\_FAV\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jaylyn Manzanares

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Jaylyn Manzanares

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Jaylyn Manzanares. I am 16 years old and an 11th-grade student at Bladensburg High School. I live in Bladensburg, in District 47. I am part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to express my support for HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

I care about this issue because asthma is a serious problem for many people, especially children whose lungs are still developing. Every day, I see children playing outside and enjoying the beauty that nature offers. What hurts to know is that many kids are unable to do so. The fear of asthma is real, and living with the uncertainty of when an attack might happen is terrifying.

I know many people who are forced to live with asthma. I've heard their stories and can never imagine being in their shoes. This is why I respectfully ask for your support for SB 780, the CHERISH Act. Your support can make a difference, so we can focus on having clean air and safe places to play and work.

Thank you for your time and for representing our community. I appreciate what you do for our community and its people.

Sincerely,

Jaylyn Manzanares.

# **HB1287 - 88 group sign on testimony - Favorable.pd**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Kunze

Position: FAV

# CHERISH Our Communities Act

*From Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving our Shared Health*

## **HB1268/SB0781 & HB1287/SB0780**

### **Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The undersigned **88 organizations** urge you to pass the CHERISH Our Communities Act, **HB1268/SB0781** applying to permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment and **HB1287/SB0780** applying to certain Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity issued by the Public Service Commission. This legislation is critical, timely, and necessary for Maryland to live up to its promises to protect vulnerable communities and leave no one behind.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act (*from Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving our Shared Health*) fills gaps in Maryland's current processes for issuing permits to pollute by incorporating considerations of the cumulative impacts of pollution. Applying best practices from legislation already passed in New Jersey in 2020, in New York in 2022, and in Minnesota in 2023, this legislation will protect Maryland's most at-risk communities that are already overburdened by disproportionate pollution and health harms. It will ensure that communities have a voice in the permitting process and protect public health.

Maryland has considered legislation like the CHERISH Our Communities Act for more than 12 years, and our state is falling behind and failing residents facing environmental injustice. We urge you to pass the CHERISH Our Communities Act in 2026.

Sincerely,

#### **Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition**

#### **17 for Peace and Justice**

Michelle Wang, President

#### **Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments**

Cara Cook, Deputy Director

#### **Arundel Rivers Federation**

Elle Bassett, South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper

#### **Audubon Mid-Atlantic**

Jim Brown, Policy Director

#### **B'More Just Transition Network**

Naadiya Hutchinson, Co-Founder

#### **Baltimore City 4th District**

Mark S. Conway, Councilperson

#### **Baltimore Green Justice Workers Cooperative (BGJWC)**

Kimberly Armstrong & Lynn Pinder, Co-Founders

#### **Baltimore Green Space**

Kindle Samuel, Interim Executive Director

#### **Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition**

Quinton Batts, Baltimore Project Manager

**CHERISH Our Communities Act**  
**HB1268/SB0781 & HB1287/SB0780**

Testimony from 88 organizations

**Baltimore Jewish Council**

Abby Snyder, Director of Government Relations

**Baltimore Peace Action**

Richard Ochs, Board Member

**Baltimore Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter Veterans For Peace**

Ellen E Barfield, Chapter Co-Founder and Coordinator

**Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition**

Min. Glenn Isaac Smith, President

**Be the Change Bmore**

Betsy Krieger, President

**Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group**

Tom Taylor, Co-Chair

**Black Girls Vote**

Dea Thomas, Environmental Justice Consultant

**Blue Water Baltimore**

Alice Volpitta, Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper

**Brooklyn Billies Real Estate Club**

Geri Ford, President

**Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry**

Lee McNair, Member

**Center for Engagement Environmental Justice and Health**

Krys White, Associate ED

**Center for Progressive Reform**

Bryan Dunning, Senior Policy Analyst

**Centro de Apoyo Familiar**

Andrea Martinez, Healthy Families Programs Manager

**Charm City Land Trusts**

Cheryl Bryant, Executive Director

**Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

Matt Stegman, MD Staff Attorney

**Clean Water Action**

Jennifer Kunze, Maryland Organizing Director

**Climate Communications Coalition**

Sonia Demiray, Executive Director

**Climate Law & Policy Project**

Donald M. Goldberg, Executive Director

**Coal Kills Baltimore**

John Scheinman, Co-Founder

**Coles Connections**

Angela Cole, Creative Director

**Community Development Network of Maryland**

Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director

**Community Law Center, Inc**

Christina Schoppert Devereux, Staff Attorney

**Community of Curtis Bay Association**

Greg Sawtell, Board Member

**Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOS (CCAIC)**

Gabby Ross, Founder

**District Heights Sustainability Committee**

Nicole Jackson, Chair

**Earthjustice**

Susan Miller, Senior Attorney

**CHERISH Our Communities Act**  
**HB1268/SB0781 & HB1287/SB0780**

Testimony from 88 organizations

**Environmental Integrity Project**

Leah Kelly, Senior Attorney

**Environmental Justice Action Team**

Raymond Mosley, Team Leader

**Envision Frederick County**

Elizabeth Bauer, Chair

**Fix Maryland Rail**

Diane Wittner, Organizer

**Food & Water Watch**

Jorge Aguilar, Southern Region Director

**Greater Baltimore Climate Initiative**

Cari Harris, CEO

**Greater Washington Region Clean Cities  
Coalition**

Antoine M. Thompson, CEO & Executive  
Director

**Healthy Climate Maryland**

Abigail Ulman, Grassroots Chair

**High Note Consulting, LLC**

Michael Dalto, President

**Illuminate Maryland**

Rishit Guttam, Co-President

**Indivisible HoCoMD**

Peter Alexander, Co-Facilitator

**Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake**

Anna Awimbo, Director of Leadership  
Development

**Interfaith Power & Light DMV**

Anjali Gulati, Climate Equity Associate

**J.Neal Design**

Jason Neal, Founder/Architect

**Langley Park Civic Association, Inc.**

Norberto Martinez, Executive Director

**League of Women Voters of Maryland**

Linda Kohn, President

**Maryland Catholics for Our Common  
Home**

Robert M. Simon, Coordinator

**Maryland Climate Partners**

Laura Bartock, Coalition Facilitator

**Maryland Latinos Unidos**

Carlos Orbe, Jr., Communications and Public  
Affairs Specialist

**Maryland League of Conservation Voters**

Rebecca Rehr, Director, Climate Policy &  
Justice

**Maryland Legislative Coalition**

Cecilia Plante, Co-Chair

**Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate  
Justice Wing**

Dave Arndt, Co-Chair

**Maryland Pesticide Education Network**

Ruth Berlin, Executive Director

**Mobilize Frederick**

Kathy Kinsey, Chair, Government Affairs  
Committee

**Montgomery Countryside Alliance**

Caroline Taylor, Executive Director

**Mountain Maryland Movement (Frostburg)**

Annie Bristow, Convener

**National Aquarium**

Maggie Ostdahl, Director of Conservation  
Policy

**CHERISH Our Communities Act**  
**HB1268/SB0781 & HB1287/SB0780**

Testimony from 88 organizations

**Nature Forward**

Angie McCarthy, Maryland Conservation Advocate

**Office of Councilman Mark Conway**

Mark S. Conway, Councilmember 4th District, Baltimore City

**Office of Councilwoman Phylcia Porter, District 10**

Phylcia Porter, Councilwoman, Baltimore City

**Out For Justice**

Trina Selden, Executive Director

**Potomac Riverkeeper Network**

Betsy Nicholas, President

**Progressive Maryland**

Max Socol, Director of Campaigns

**Reconnecting Communities In West Baltimore Coalition**

Min. Glenn Isaac Smith, President

**SB7 Coalition Inc.**

Michael Middleton, Executive Director

**Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health**

Maria Payan, Co-Founder

**ShoreRivers**

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper

**Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (SURJ3A)**

Lynda Davis, Chapter Coordinator

**Sierra Club Maryland Chapter**

Paula Posas, Deputy Director

**South Baltimore Community Land Trust**

Shashawnda Campbell, EJ Director

**St. Vincent de Paul Church Green Team**

Kathy Younkin, Green Team Chair

**St. Vincent de Paul Church's Racial Equity Group**

Peggy Meyer, Co-Chair

**Surfrider Foundation**

Matt Gove, Mid-Atlantic Policy Manager

**Sustainable Hyattsville**

Greg Smith, Board Member

**The Nature Conservancy**

Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Director

**Third Act Maryland**

Laura Welch, Co-Facilitator

**Trash Free Maryland**

Kelly Doordan, Executive Director

**Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County**

Erin Gallagher, Board Member and Social Justice Chair

**Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland**

Phil Webster, PdD, Lead Advocate for the Climate

**Waterkeepers Chesapeake**

Robin Broder, Acting Executive Director

**York Road Partnership**

Dan Pontious, President

**Young, Gifted & Green**

LaTricea D. Adams, Founder CEO & President

# **HB1287 Clean Water Action Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Kunze

Position: FAV



**Testimony Supporting HB1287**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**March 13, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action urges you to issue a favorable report on HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act applying to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity. This important legislation will provide important, targeted environmental health protections for the communities in Maryland most overburdened by pollution.

HB1287 is environmental justice legislation developed and driven by frontline communities in Maryland. This bill applies only to new or expanding polluting energy generation proposed to be sited in or near communities in Maryland already at risk from pollution according to data in the Maryland Department of the Environment's EnviroScreen tool. The bill will fill critical gaps in Maryland's current system of issuing Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, ensuring that community health is put first in communities in Maryland currently experiencing environmental injustice.

This bill is both the result of years and decades of organizing and advocacy among communities in Maryland overburdened by pollution, and reflective of lessons learned from successful bills passed in states like New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York. Please issue a favorable report on HB1287 incorporating the sponsor amendments reflecting updated consensus, and no other amendments, so that communities on the front lines of pollution in Maryland can gain these critical protections.

Thank you,

Jennifer Kunze  
Maryland Organizing Director  
Clean Water Action  
jkunze@cleanwater.org

**HB1287\_ENT\_CHERISH.Audubon.FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jim Brown

Position: FAV



**Maryland Office**  
2901 E. Baltimore St  
Baltimore, MD 21214

March 11, 2026

**To:** Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and members of the House Committee on the Environment and Transportation

**From:** Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

**Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland HB 1287, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis - CHERISH our Communities Act**

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of HB 1287. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Audubon enthusiastically supports the CHERISH Act because it will protect vulnerable communities from the negative impacts of polluters while supporting a cleaner environment for the people and birds of every community in Maryland.

Audubon works with communities in South Baltimore and the Lower Eastern Shore to restore important habitat, improve parks, and enhance public gathering spaces. We see firsthand the environmental justice disparities and negative public health impacts of pollution that these communities face at much higher rates than other communities. Audubon believes the CHERISH Act's proposed changes to environmental permitting to provide adequate environmental impact assessment and opportunities for public participation for new, renewed, and expanded environmental permits that are issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) will improve the lives of residents in communities across the state, and in particular those communities that have bared the brunt of environmental and public health burdens. The additional benefits to the broader environment will include cleaner water and air which positively impact bird habitat and the ecosystems which we all depend on.

Audubon supports the CHERISH act because Audubon believes in equitable environmental justice for every community in Maryland. Audubon believes everyone in Maryland deserves access to clean air and water, and healthy outdoor spaces. We believe the CHERISH Act is a necessary step to protect Marylanders while keeping our state a leader in environmental planning and environmental justice.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of HB 1287.

Thank You,

Jim Brown  
Policy Director  
Audubon Mid-Atlantic

# **John Garofolo Written Testimony for HB1287 and HB1**

Uploaded by: John Garofolo

Position: FAV

**House Bills 1287 and 1268 – SUPPORT**

**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (HB 1287)**

**and**

**Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health (HB 1268)**

**(CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**House Environment and Transportation Committee**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Garofolo. Thank you for allowing me to testify for HB 1287 and HB 1268. I'm writing a combined testimony in support of these bills since they are closely related and would protect my health and the health of communities all around me from the many sources of pollution in my area of Curtis Bay in Anne Arundel County. I am a retired federal scientist, an Anne Arundel Watershed Steward, a citizen environmentalist, a citizen member of the MPA Cox Creek Citizen Oversight Committee, and I have previously been on the board of directors of my community association. I also facilitate the all-volunteer Anne Arundel Patapsco Environmental Coalition which engages with several hundred citizens of Pasadena, Glen Burnie, and Curtis Bay on pollution issues because my area of northern Anne Arundel County along the Patapsco River has been struggling with polluters and pollution for decades.

I have lived in Stoney Beach for over 20 years – a beautiful 62-acre peninsula community of 458 homes in Curtis Bay in Northern Anne Arundel County surrounded by the Patapsco River, Stoney Creek, and Cox Creek. It would be an oasis if it wasn't also surrounded by polluters. Our area in northern Anne Arundel County and South Baltimore nearby is riddled with legacy pollution and continued polluters of many types spanning coal/diesel/gas power plants, sewage treatment plants, medical and other waste incinerators, dumps of toxic materials and forever chemicals, heavy metals, PCBs, petroleum byproducts, chemical and nuclear waste, coal piles and spent coal ash, contaminated dredge material, fuel and processed fuel storage, and more. **We have identified 4 polluting facilities within hundreds of feet of our community and are aware of over 60 in our area.**

The impacts of pollution on health are serious. **But, we are extremely concerned about the multiplicative effects on our health from the cumulative impacts of the many sources of pollution near our communities.**

Myself and many neighbors in my community and nearby communities in northern Anne Arundel County are convinced that the pollution here has greatly affected our health. We are discouraged that in 2026 the state still treats our area like the “Sacrifice Zone” of greater Baltimore through its lack of meaningful regulation and oversight of polluters and protection of pollution overburdened communities from cumulative pollution.

Exposure to multiple pollutants creates greater synergistic health risks and impacts spanning chronic illnesses, early mortality, lost work, lost business, health care system strain, infrastructure strain, depressed home values, and overarching economic impacts. Unfortunately, right now, the state approves permits for polluting agencies and industries largely without considering these impacts of cumulative pollution in a given area or the socioeconomic status of nearby communities. The bills collectively called “CHERISH” will create modernized regulatory controls on the amount and kinds of pollution that will be permitted to be generated in overburdened areas of the state. **It’s important that the legislation defined in HB 1287 and HB 1268 is passed into law to protect us from the cumulative impacts of multiple sources of pollution. This matters to me very personally.**

**My home and the hundreds of others in my community (see attached photo) and in several nearby communities are within 1000 feet of the coal-powered Brandon Shores power generation station and even closer to the Wagner power generation station** which was recently converted from coal to diesel and natural gas. Per the Talen Energy website<sup>1</sup> (the owner of the two plants), these plants currently employ 4 boilers emitting pollution – that’s 4 sources of pollution. **Our community sometimes chokes on the fumes of these polluters, and we have ash from Brandon Shores frequently falling on our homes – even with the emissions mitigation added to Brandon Shores in 2012.** And we’ve now been told that these polluters must be kept open until 2029 because the PJM grid operator and BG&E and multiple states on the PJM grid have made poor decisions about electricity reliability. We are paying the price with our health. I began engaging with Anne Arundel County and MDE in 2016 on these polluters after learning that the entire Greater Baltimore area had been declared a sulfur dioxide non-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.talenenergy.com/our-portfolio/>

attainment zone by the EPA because of the power plants next to my home. I worked with Senator Simonaire and District 31 legislators and our county councilman in 2017 for a bill that was signed in to law to place an SO2 monitor in my community because there was no nearby monitor. In 2018, as required by that legislation, the MD Department of Environment (MDE) installed a SO2 monitor in nearby Riviera Beach which was described by the EPA in its 2022 report as antiquated and buggy and its data useless. At MDE's request, the EPA allowed MDE to remove the monitor instead of replacing it. The EPA was forced to disregard all of the data from the monitor. **Our community has never had actual independent continuous physical monitoring of its SO2 levels or other toxins emitted by coal burning including NO2, particulates, mercury, other heavy metals, and toxic chemical byproducts.**

**But, we have anecdotal evidence that we have been exposed to extensive pollution from these power plants.** Two years ago when we set out to create a living shoreline to protect a vulnerable point in our community from extreme erosion caused by storms, we reached out to the MD Port Administration (MPA) to make beneficial use of dredge material taken from the water around our community to replace the lost sand there. MPA identified newly dredged material from just off our shore from Cox Creek between our community and the Wagner power plant. **When it was tested as required by MDE, it was found to contain high levels of a carcinogenic chemical from coal-burning called benzo[a]pyrene.** This means that we've been exposed to this chemical in the air and in our soil and in the waters around our community for decades. The pile of sand had to sit in the sun for a year so that the chemical would dissipate before we could use it. **We do not know how much benzo[a]pyrene (or other toxins) we're still being exposed to.**

**In engaging MPA on our living shoreline project, we learned that they planned to dig up the Patapsco River just off our shore, mine the sand and gravel in the riverbed up to 90 feet deep, and dump contaminated harbor dredge in its place in a process they call Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD).** Our kids swim and crab and fish in that water. We should be trying to protect and restore the fragile Patapsco, not unnecessarily worsen it. A group of volunteers have spent the last two years working tirelessly to bring sensibility to the state on this issue and worked hard with our District 31 legislators to create a 4-year moratorium on Confined Aquatic Disposal which was just recently signed into law by a General Assembly over-ride of the Governor's inexplicable veto. There are now only 3 years left on the moratorium.

**Just over the last few months, there have been suspicious emissions of pollution from both the Wagner and Brandon Shores power plants that members of our community reported to**

**multiple agencies in the state.** A boiler/stack cleaning operation from Brandon Shores rained a dirty salty substance down on our homes last fall. Our community was frightened because we weren't told what it was or where it came from. Since then, there have been several emissions of black smoke from the Wagner power plant during faulty startups of its diesel generators. We have begun asking more questions about these issues and lodging complaints, but nothing has been done except that the power plant owner recently agreed to notify us when there's an issue, but that won't stop the problems or our exposure. We are considering installing our own air monitoring equipment at our own expense so that we're better informed about our local air quality because we're not getting timely reliable information. **HB 1287 could make a significant difference in assuring oversight and accountability for these kinds of emissions and that they're taken into account in their determination of our cumulative exposure to pollution.**

There are also long-standing toxic pools and new piles of coal and spent coal ash pits on the grounds of the power plants that are likely leaching into the Patapsco near our community. **It's not clear which of HB 1287 or HB 1268 would apply to those. This is one of many reasons why HB 1287 and HB 1268 are both important and need to both be implemented in tandem.**

**We also experience frequent horrible sewage smells coming from the Anne Arundel Cox Creek Water Reclamation Facility (sewage treatment plant) which is also just hundreds of feet from our community, and it has had several spills into Cox Creek adjoining our community.** We've made many reports to the county and state regarding the odor, with absolutely no resulting action. We'd like to better understand what toxins and bio hazards we're being exposed to in those odors.

**We also are constantly barraged with extremely toxic odors coming from the Curtis Bay Energy medical waste incinerator.** The odors smell like a combination of organic material, plastics, and chemicals. Once again, we've made many reports, but nothing seems to happen. It's essential that we better understand what toxins we're being exposed to in those odors. And that emissions from this horrible polluter are properly regulated for our health.

We have anecdotal evidence from our community and neighboring communities of higher respiratory, cardiac, cancer, and neurological disease in our area – likely due to the proliferation of polluters all around us. **I know this personally because over the last several years, I've struggled with lymphoma (cancer), cardiac atrial fibrillation (AFIB) and atrial flutter, asthma,**

**and other health problems that perplex my doctors and I am concerned that they were brought on by the toxins in my environment.**

The awful and harsh reality is that a long time ago, the state apparently decided that we're part of the "Sacrifice Zone" for the greater Baltimore area and that we're just supposed to accept that and shut up. But, nobody sent me that memo when I moved here 20 years ago. Nobody handed me a pollution report when I bought my home. I wish they had! Ironically, a version of that is now being created and available through an app and it's impacting our home values.<sup>2</sup> My home got a 5/10 on the app – a "Major" pollution air quality score and it shows nearby polluters as well as historical pollution.

Nobody's health or prosperity should be sacrificed to industrial poisoning for the good of corporate greed or laziness of the state and counties. Our state and counties should be standing up for our health! First and foremost – especially with skyrocketing health costs! And, our state and local governments should be taking the real health and environmental costs of pollution into account when they consider permitting requests from polluters – especially for overburdened communities. And it shouldn't be forcing us to do the research and investigation that it should be doing to bring awareness to the issues.

The CHERISH Bills HB 1287 and HB 1268 have a number of benefits that will help to address these issues.

1. CHERISH would create a fair and equitable system for measuring the degree and types of pollution in communities across the state, determine action levels for implementing overburden regulatory controls, and create a regulatory framework to reduce pollution levels in these communities via enhancements in the existing permitting and oversight process.
2. CHERISH would protect the most overburdened communities from the harms of cumulative pollution and provide a voice for these communities in the permitting process and since historically, pollution has been concentrated largely in socioeconomically depressed communities, it would significantly help to address ongoing environmental justice issues in the state.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://firststreet.org/>

3. CHERISH would not only protect the most overburdened communities from air, water, and soil pollution, but those nearby as well. This is especially important since air pollution can travel great distances and impact many communities and soil and water pollution can impact downstream communities.
4. CHERISH seeks to create an economical and efficient solution to overburden regulation. The proposed legislation would cover pollution from many, but not all sources of pollution. It was designed to balance the burden of implementing these new regulations by the state and the taxpayers with the burden of pollution in overburdened communities and by addressing the worst forms of pollution not covered in existing regulations.
5. The CHERISH bill will help to protect community and worker health, reduce sick days and pollution-related chronic illnesses and disabilities, reduce impacts on businesses, reduce impacts to both public and private health and economic infrastructure, and improve property values.
6. The CHERISH bill will help to fill essential gaps in the quickly eroding EPA pollution regulatory infrastructure in meaningful ways that will protect citizens' health.
7. The CHERISH bill will help to protect new homeowners in new housing developments being built to support the state's goals in providing sufficient housing and affordable housing.
8. Fines collected from permit violations can be used to support the CHERISH program in MDE and to help offset the taxpayer burden in regulating and enforcing compliance.

My dream is for clean water, air, and land for ALL communities across the state and to turn that dream into a reality for communities which have struggled for decades with pollution overburden like my community and nearby areas in Northern Anne Arundel County and South Baltimore. These communities will then become Abundance Zones rather than Sacrifice Zones that they've been. And to get there, we need legislation to more appropriately regulate industrial pollution that we're exposed to and fight the inertia that has held us in its grip for so long. This is even more important as **the state and county is committed to building thousands of new homes in our area. The state of MD needs to equally commit to providing a clean environment for the citizens who will live in them and for those of us who have suffered from cumulative pollution for decades – especially in the face of weakening EPA regulations.**

**John S. Garofolo | johngstonebeach@gmail.com**

**House Bills HB 1287 and HB 1268 proposed in this legislative session will create the necessary regulatory infrastructure to implement a measured and cost-effective approach to correcting the heavy burden of cumulative pollution in Maryland's most polluted communities and it will give overburdened communities a voice in the process. It is the right approach to reducing pollution overburden and its many costs to health, economic prosperity, and health-impacted infrastructure for our state. This is URGENT as the EPA is quickly eliminating regulation of pollution. Maryland must stand up for a clean environment for ALL of its citizens!**

**I ask you to strongly SUPPORT Bills HB 1287 and HB 1268 per the language proposed by the sponsor with no amendments and give it a favorable reading.**

Sincerely,

John S. Garofolo

Stoney Beach, Curtis Bay, MD

**John S. Garofolo | johngstonebeach@gmail.com**

Photo of Stoney Beach Community from late 2024 in Curtis Bay, Anne Arundel County with Brandon Shores and Wagner power generation stations just next to us.



**2026 CHERISH Act HB1287\_FAV\_FWW.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jorge Aguilar

Position: FAV



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[foodandwaterwatch.org](http://foodandwaterwatch.org)

### Testimony In Support of CHERISH Act PSC Bill (HB 1287)

On behalf of our over 40,000 members in Maryland, Food & Water Watch urges Senators in this committee to submit a favorable report on the CHERISH Our Communities Act (HB1287) which would require the Public Service Commission to conduct important environmental justice analyses before approving Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity for polluting generation stations such as gas plants.

The CHERISH Act would fill an important gap in the PSC's permitting process, which doesn't currently consider how new polluters would further burden communities that already host gas plants, trash incinerators, and other polluters. The respiratory and cardiovascular effects of living near polluting generation stations are well known, and adding additional facilities to environmental justice communities would only exacerbate already poor health outcomes.

By analyzing the cumulative health and environmental impacts new polluters will cause, the PSC would be implementing norms and processes meant to safeguard against historical policies that have led to environmental racism and classism, and thus would take steps to reduce these harms.

The processes set by the CHERISH Act would only apply to communities that have been identified using environmental health indicators such as proximity to these emitting power plants, and/or communities who have negative health outcome rates higher than that of the rest of the state. This means the PSC would not be overwhelmed by a need to fulfill these requirements for every permit request that it receives.

It is also important to note that these new rules will only apply to polluting industries, not cleaner renewable energy industries, such as wind and solar power. This, then, would allow for these projects to secure their other required permits in a timely fashion ahead of the polluting ones.

We urge you to pass the CHERISH Act to defend overburdened communities and protect them from the harms of new, polluting power plants.

**Jorge Aguilar**  
Southern Region Director  
[Food & Water Watch](http://Food & Water Watch)  
O: [202.683.2529](tel:202.683.2529)  
[jaguilar@fwwatch.org](mailto:jaguilar@fwwatch.org)

**hb1287\_mdsierraclub\_fav-10mar2026\_CHERISH-PSC.docx**

Uploaded by: Josh Tulkin

Position: FAV



**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: March 10, 2026**

The Sierra Club Maryland Chapter strongly supports the CHERISH Our Communities Act.<sup>1</sup> The Act is a two-bill package: one to cover permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) ([HB 1268/SB 781](#)) and one to cover permits issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC) ([HB 1287/SB 780](#)). The CHERISH Act gives two regulatory agencies – MDE and the PSC – clear authority to take environmental justice data into account in permitting decisions. For the most pollution overburdened communities in Maryland, the Act: (1) adds consideration of pollution from nearby sources, (2) provides guidance on new conditions to include in approved permits, and (3) requires meaningful community engagement.

Pollution negatively impacts health. Multiple, cumulative sources of pollution in the community increase cancer risk, shorten lifespans, and worsen overall health. Some communities in Maryland have faced this situation acutely and for far too long. The communities facing the most pollution in Maryland require additional state-level protections to prevent them from becoming exposed to even greater pollution and to reduce their current exposure. The CHERISH Act is the answer to this.

The CHERISH Act ensures that MDE and the PSC obtain the data needed to make an informed decision on a permit, with a Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) Report. The Act also ensures that communities have a voice in the permitting process.<sup>2</sup> The CHERISH Act is targeted and limited and applies best practices from similar legislation in other states, including New Jersey, New York, and Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>

The CHERISH Act is necessary to enact principles of state law and a 2025 gubernatorial executive order. Maryland state law defines environmental justice as “equal protection from environmental and public health hazards for all people regardless of race, income, culture, and social status.”<sup>4</sup> Governor Moore’s [executive order](#) on Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity (VOICE) aims to “ensure consistent, equitable, and fair distribution of State resources” and have “all State Agencies ... track and address disparities related to environmental hazards, exposures, risks, health outcomes, investments, and benefits.”

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<sup>1</sup> CHERISH is an acronym for CHERISH Our Communities from Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving our Shared Health.

<sup>2</sup> Other elements of the Act can be viewed at Clean Water Action’s “Support the CHERISH Our Communities Act” webpage at <https://cleanwater.org/actions/support-cherish-our-communities-act-0>, or in the bills themselves.

<sup>3</sup> [New Jersey Adopts Final EJ Rule on Cumulative Impacts - The Environmental Council of the States \(ECOS\)](#); [Governor Hochul Signs Landmark Environmental Justice Legislation Reducing the Cumulative Impacts of Pollution on Disadvantaged Communities - WE ACT for Environmental Justice](#); [Cumulative impacts rulemaking | Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#).

<sup>4</sup> [MD Environment Code § 1-701 \(2024\)](#).

Our reality has fallen short of these principles, and thus laws like the CHERISH Act are needed. Law has been described as the way regular people have a voice in systems that prioritize other forms of power. Those other forms of power have prevailed for generations in ways that have been highly detrimental to some of our communities and left them gravely overburdened.

We all need clean air and water and healthy outdoor spaces. This is our moment to stand for environmental justice in Maryland and be a beacon for other states and our nation.

We urge a favorable report on these bills and your strong support in their passage this legislative session.

Paula Posas  
Deputy Director  
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter  
paula.posas@mdsierra.org

Josh Tulkin  
Chapter Director  
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter  
josh.tulkin@mdsierra.org

**HB1287\_CHERISH PSC\_E&T\_CCMC\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Karl Held

Position: FAV



**CLIMATE COALITION**  
**Montgomery County, MD**

**Testimony on:** HB1287– Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)  
**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Organization:** Climate Coalition Montgomery County  
**Submitting:** Karl Held  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** March 13, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB1287. The Climate Coalition Montgomery County, a group of 20 local organizations whose mission is to lead action on climate change, advance a sustainable and just economy, and build resilience, urges you to vote favorably on HB1287.

HB1287 would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk area to include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report describing and including information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the PSC to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

This bill addresses both environmental justice and health issues. First, the legacy of racism underlies the location of power plants, and this in turn, has led to the disproportionate exposure to harmful pollution in the surrounding communities. As early as 1940, and as late as 2019, evidence links historic red-lining to power plant siting, which in turn leads to a disproportionate burden on [communities of color](#) from the pollutants emitted by these power plants. In addition to power plants themselves, related activities [expose communities](#) to pollution from truck traffic, noise, water contamination and social disruption. Residents of Prince George’s County are fighting for their right to breathe clean air. Brandywine in particular, is exposed to inexcusable examples of [environmental and racial injustice](#). The community is 67% black and has 4 power plants. [They have had to fight against](#) another (gas fired) power plant coming to their area. In addition, diesel trucks, groundwater pollution from a military toxic waste dump, and PM2.5 from coal ash recently rated the [7<sup>th</sup> worst](#) such site in the nation. SB0780 requires the PSC to consider cumulative effects.

Second, health harms from mercury and other neurotoxins affect children who live near power plants. [Evidence](#) links neurobehavioral health problems to proximity to coal fired power plants and coal ash. Mercury and other neurotoxic pollutants are emitted from coal and oil fired power plants and are toxic to the [developing brain](#) especially in utero but also to infants and young

children. Exposure to mercury from fish is [higher](#) in proximity to power plants, which would affect low income families eating a subsistence diet dependent on fishing. SB0780 requires the PSC to consider health risks.

Third, repeal of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mercury and Air Toxic (MAT) standards for power plants increases the need for a bill like CHERISH to protect the health of Marylanders. MAT standards saved 33 million dollars in [health costs](#) according to the EPA, and now those safeguards will be gone. The mercury standards repeal will worsen the disproportionate health effects on communities in proximity to power plants. According to the American Lung Association, it will “expose people to toxic pollution proven to harm brain development, trigger asthma attacks and cause cancer and premature death. In addition, weakening these protections will also place an [unfair burden](#) on the communities located nearest these polluting facilities, who already breathe too much unhealthy air.”

HB1287 will require the PSC to factor in health and environmental harms when issuing a CPCN in already overburdened communities. The weakening of EPA protections under the current administration increases the need for CHERISH to protect these very communities and especially the young children who grow up near power plants. For these reasons we urge a favorable vote in committee on HB1287.

# **Cherish Burden Analysis HB1287.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kathleen Valdivia

Position: FAV

Bill: HB1287: Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - Burden Analysis (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Hearing Date: March 10, 2026

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Andre Johnson, Jr.

Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee

Committee Members: Delegates Marc Korman, Michele Guyton, Nick Allen, Kevin Anderson, Terry Baker, Dylan Behler, Regina Boyce, Linda Foley, David Fraser-Hidalgo, Robin Grammer, Anne Healey, Marvin Holmes, Jay Jacobs, Robbyn Lewis, Jeffrie Long, Todd Morgan, Ryan Nawrocki, Darrell Odom, Dana Stein, Natalie Ziegler

Submitting Organization: The Green Team of St John The Evangelist Roman Catholic Church

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB1287: Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - Burden Analysis ( CHERISH Our Communities Act). The Green Team at St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic (SJERC) Church in Columbia, Maryland, urges this committee to vote favorably on the CHERISH Act. Our group's mission is to care for all of God's creation, both the human and natural world, as instructed by Catholic social teaching. To that end, our activities include planting trees and gardens, educating ourselves and our communities about environmental issues, and engaging in advocacy. We are providing written testimony in strong support of HB1287, which would address the disproportionate environmental and public health harms that environmental justice communities in Maryland historically have and currently are facing.

For centuries, polluting facilities have been disproportionately and deliberately sited in minority and economically distressed communities in Maryland. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for issuing Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for generating stations but often the PSC only considers CPCNs for each facility and its emissions in a vacuum - not considering the total impact from the concentration of polluters in the surrounding community.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act will change this unjust system. The Act will require environmental justice review and community input for specific CPCNs under consideration. These would include certificates for specific types of generating stations located within a certain at-risk census tract (communities in and immediately around census tracts with an environmental justice score of 75 or above, according to Maryland's EJ Screening Tool). And if the PSC concludes that issuing the certificate would harm nearby communities, the CHERISH Our Communities Act will protect the community either by ensuring the certificate is denied, or by requiring additional controls for the generating station and benefits for the community.

Maryland communities that have suffered from an undue and disproportionate burden of pollution should not have to endure further injury from new, expanded, or renewed permitted projects. HB1287 provides a thoughtful process to avoid future harm. The Green Team of SJERC Church strongly supports HB1287 and urges a FAVORABLE report in Committee.

**HB1287 – Generating Stations-PSC\_LOS\_Final\_signed.**

Uploaded by: Kathryn Feeley

Position: FAV



March 11, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251, Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: House Bill 1287 – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

Dear Chair Korman:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (Council) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 1287 (HB 1287), which would strengthen the review process for certain generating stations proposed in at-risk census tracts by requiring a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report and explicit consideration of cumulative environmental and public health stressors before the issuance of a certificate of public convenience and necessity.

HB 1287 represents an important step toward ensuring that decisions about large-scale energy infrastructure fully account for existing environmental health conditions in the communities where generating stations are proposed.

**Energy Infrastructure and Cancer Risk**

Generating stations—particularly fossil fuel–based facilities—can contribute to emissions of particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, hazardous air pollutants, and other contaminants associated with increased cancer risk and chronic disease. Communities located near power plants and major energy infrastructure often experience sustained exposure to air pollution over many years, compounding existing environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities.

HB 1287 requires that applications for certain generating stations located within at-risk census tracts include a BURDEN report evaluating existing environmental and public health burdens, as well as the projected contribution of the proposed generating station. By requiring analysis of environmental justice scores, ambient pollutant concentrations, traffic impacts, and other cumulative environmental stressors, the bill strengthens the Public Service Commission’s (PSC) ability to assess the full public health implications of energy siting decisions.

**Addressing Cumulative Impacts in At-Risk Communities**

Cancer disparities are influenced not only by access to screening and treatment, but also by long-term environmental exposures. Many communities identified as overburdened already experience elevated levels of air pollution, proximity to emitting power plants, and other industrial stressors.



HB 1287 appropriately requires the PSC to determine whether issuing a certificate of public convenience and necessity would, together with other environmental or public health stressors affecting an at-risk census tract, cause or contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors that are higher than those borne by other areas within the State. This cumulative impact framework is consistent with modern environmental health science and with the Council's commitment to addressing upstream drivers of cancer disparities.

**Advancing Equitable Energy Decision-Making**

Energy reliability and public convenience are critical considerations in infrastructure planning. HB 1287 ensures that public health equity is explicitly considered as part of that determination. By incorporating cumulative burden analysis into Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity review, the bill strengthens transparency, promotes informed decision-making, and helps protect communities already experiencing disproportionate environmental risks.

**Aligning With Maryland's Comprehensive Cancer Control Priorities**

The Council supports policies that reduce modifiable cancer risk factors and address structural drivers of health inequities. Environmental conditions, including long-term exposure to air pollution from industrial and energy sources, are critical determinants of cancer risk. By strengthening health-based review standards for generating stations in at-risk census tracts, HB 1287 advances prevention-focused, equity-driven cancer control strategies in Maryland.

For these reasons, the Maryland State Council on Cancer Control supports HB 1287 and respectfully urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee to give the bill favorable consideration.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to public health and cancer prevention in Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Taofeek Owonikoko".

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Taofeek Owonikoko, MD  
Chair  
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control

# Written Testimony - HB1287.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathryn Little

Position: FAV

Written Testimony

Bill: **HB1287**

Position: **FAV**

March 11, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

As a concerned resident of Baltimore City, I am writing to express my strong support of HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act applying to CPCNs for polluting energy generation. Many residential areas are in close proximity to industrial areas or facilities that pollute their environment, despite the best efforts of zoning laws. We have seen time and again communities become “sacrifice zones,” bearing more than their share of degradation and pollution.

Currently, nearby communities have no opportunity to give public comment on several types of permits to pollute, including more than half of air pollution permits. The CHERISH Our Communities Act will ensure public participation in the process and fix this longstanding environmental injustice. It is also targeted in both scope and geography and applies only to parts of the state that are so burdened by disproportionate pollution.

I urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Little  
881 W Lombard St  
Baltimore, MD 21201

**MF\_HB 1268:1287\_CHERISH Our communities ActF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kathy Kinsey

Position: FAV



**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: House Bills 1268/1287– CHERISH Our Communities Act**

**Organization: Mobilize Frederick**

**Submitting: Kathy Kinsey**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: March 10, 2026**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1268 and 1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act. Mobilize Frederick, a nonprofit community advocacy organization formed to assist with implementation of innovative local solutions to address climate change, strongly urges the Committee to issue **favorable** reports on HB 1268 and 1287.

These paired environmental justice bills would correct a widely acknowledged flaw in both the Maryland Department of Environment’s permitting program for key environmental permits and the Public Service Commission’s approval process for siting polluting electric generating stations – the failure to consider the total existing pollution load when deciding on the issuance of major permits for new or existing facilities in already overburdened communities.

In Maryland and across the United States, a decades long history of constructing major highways and siting landfills, hazardous waste facilities, incinerators, industrial plants, and other polluting facilities in or near communities of color and low-income communities have disproportionately exposed these communities to air, water, and soil pollution, and the resulting adverse health impacts.

This practice is well documented in the Curtis Bay area of Baltimore City and the Brandywine Community in Prince George’s County. Curtis Bay is home to some 70 different polluting industrial facilities that include the CSX coal terminal, medical waste and waste-to-energy incinerators, a chemical plant, a landfill, and heavy diesel truck traffic. The life expectancy of Curtis Bay residents at birth is among the lowest in the City. In 2017, the Baltimore City Board

of Health reported that the incidence of respiratory illness, heart disease, and all cancers in Curtis Bay was higher than in the entire City as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

In Prince George's County, residents of the majority black Brandywine community live with the air pollution emitted by four fossil-fuel fired power plants located within a 13-mile radius of the community,<sup>2</sup> as well as a coal ash depository rated as the seventh worst such site in the Country,<sup>3</sup> and a military disposal site for hazardous waste, which has contaminated the groundwater. These frontline communities and others like them would benefit from a cumulative impact analysis by regulatory authorities considering permits for new or existing facilities in overburdened communities.

MDE's current regulations do not, however, authorize it to take cumulative pollution impacts into account when considering applications for the issuance, renewal, or modification of key permits for industrial plants, landfills, incinerators, or other high-impact facilities. HB 1268 would impose new permitting requirements for facilities in "at risk" census tracts already overburdened with pollution – those census tracts with an environmental justice score at or above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile in the State and within a 1.5-mile radius, or in close proximity to certain high-impact facilities. The bill would require:

- Enhanced notice and public participation requirements for several types of permits that are not now subject to public participation requirements.
- Applicants for first-time issuance or renewal of a covered permit to submit a BURDEN report, or "baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs," to assess the existing pollution burden and any additional pollution burden that would occur from the applicant's site or facility.
- MDE to consider the BURDEN report and take cumulative and historic pollution into account in determining whether issuance of a permit would increase the pollution burden.
- Denial of a permit for a new or existing facility that MDE determines would increase the pollution burden or health stressors in an already overburdened census tract, unless it determines the facility meets an essential community need that cannot be reasonably met through other means, in which case it must impose permit conditions to mitigate the impacts.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.comcommunity/public-health/what-its-like-to-live-in-the-epicenter-of-toxic-pollution-QN7KNX5F3ZDH5KG3HE7YRDPPNQ/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://dbknews.com/2021/02/23/environmental-racism-brandywine-coronavirus-power-plants/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://phys.org/news/2022-11-maryland-sites-polluting-coal-ash.html#google\\_vignette](https://phys.org/news/2022-11-maryland-sites-polluting-coal-ash.html#google_vignette)

- For a permit renewal that doesn't allow for an increase in pollution, but that MDE determines will cause or contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors, either denial of the permit or issuance of the permit with the addition of conditions to mitigate the adverse environmental or public health stressors.

HB 1287 would embed similar requirements into the PSC's Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) process for approval of polluting electric generating stations. The federal government's support for expanding fossil fuel power plants – especially coal plants -- and the Environmental Protection Agency's rollback of power plant emission standards for mercury, heavy metals, and particulate matter underscores the need for a robust cumulative pollution impact analysis for proposed power plants in at risk communities.

Together, HB 1268 and 1287 will bring Maryland's environmental permitting programs in line with other leadership states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, and New York that have adopted cumulative impact assessment requirements as part of their permitting processes to mitigate these impacts in environmental justice communities.

For the forgoing reasons, we respectfully request the Committee to issue **favorable** reports for HB 1268 and 1287.

Sincerely,  
KATHY KINSEY  
Chair, Government Affairs Committee

cc: Karen Cannon  
Executive Director

**HB1287\_Katie Bautista\_FAV\_CHERISH Act.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Bautista

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Katie Bautista

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Katie Bautista, and I am a student at Hampstead Hill Academy. I live in Baltimore City, in District 41. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1287 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and communities across Maryland.

I have lived with asthma since birth. Every day, I worry about how the air I breathe affects my health, especially at school and in my neighborhood. Many Latino and low-income communities, including mine, are exposed to high levels of pollution from traffic, industry, and other environmental hazards. These cumulative impacts make it harder for children like me to stay healthy, focus in school, and simply enjoy being kids.

Despite facing the greatest environmental and health burdens, our communities are too often left out of decisions that affect our lives. The CHERISH Our Communities Act would help ensure that state agencies consider the real impacts of pollution on vulnerable communities and make more equitable decisions that prioritize our health and future.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1287 so that all Maryland families—especially children—can grow up in healthier, safer environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Katie Bautista*

**HB1287\_Kobe Cruz\_FAV\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kobe Cruz

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Kobe Cruz

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Kobe Cruz, I am 16 years old, and I am an 11th grade student at Bladensburg High School. I live in Bladensburg, in District 47. I am a part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to you today to express my support for HB1287 - CHERISH Our Communities Act.

The CHERISH Act is an important bill that helps protect clean air, clean water, and healthy communities. Now is the time to make a difference for communities across Maryland. Please support HB1287, the CHERISH Act. This issue is important because many people I know have suffered from asthma.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB780. Passing this bill will protect the health of children and families across Maryland and create a cleaner, safer future for our communities.

Thank you for your time and for representing our community. I appreciate what you do for our community and the people.

Sincerely,

Kobe Cruz

**CEHPAC\_Senate Bill 780\_ House Bill 1287\_LetterofSu**

Uploaded by: Kylan Simpson

Position: FAV



## CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & PROTECTION ADVISORY COUNCIL

February 26, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee  
Taylor House Office Building, Room 251  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1912

RE: **SUPPORT Senate Bill 780/ House Bill 1287** Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Dear Chair Feldman and Chair Korman:

The Maryland Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC) respectfully submits this letter of **SUPPORT for Senate Bill 780 and House Bill 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**. This bill requires that an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk census tract include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report describing and including information on certain environmental and public health burdens. Additionally, it requires the Public Service Commission to make certain determinations as to whether issuing a certain certificate of public convenience and necessity will cause or contribute to certain adverse environmental or public health stressors.

Established by the General Assembly, the purpose of CEHPAC is to identify environmental hazards that may affect children's health and recommend solutions to those hazards. CEHPAC supports the proposed legislation to the extent that it promotes positive health and environmental outcomes that in turn will include children. Children experience a disproportionate risk and greater risk than adults for exposure to and possible illness from environmental hazards. CEHPAC supports decreasing cumulative harms that impact the health of children in overburdened and underserved communities, moving towards:

- The lowest possible toxicity or hazard profile.
- The most favorable environmental profile (least possible persistence and/or environmental impact).
- The least total effect of multiple adverse experiences in their lives.

The CHERISH Act will also address the disproportionate environmental and public health harms that environmental justice communities in Maryland face from pollution generating facilities. For centuries, these facilities have been disproportionately and deliberately sited in marginalized and economically distressed communities in Maryland. Low-wealth, Black, and other communities of color in Maryland face greater cancer risks and exposure to air toxics due to higher pollution burden. Currently, many environmental permit applications do not take into consideration the cumulative impacts posed by multiple and historic sources of pollution. The CHERISH Act prioritizes Maryland residents' well-being, especially of our most vulnerable, and increases consideration of burden in decision-making processes.

February 26, 2026

SB781/HB1268

Page 2 of 2

CEHPAC seeks to ensure that the rules, regulations, and standards of the State protect children from environmental hazards and enable children in Maryland to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. CEHPAC urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill. CEHPAC looks forward to working with the General Assembly on this and other issues, and thanks you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Megan Weil Latshaw". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Megan Weil Latshaw, PhD MHS  
Commission Member  
Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council

Cc: CEHPAC Members

# **HB1287 CHERISH Act (PSC) - Maryland Climate Partne**

Uploaded by: Laura Bartock

Position: FAV



**Testimony on HB 1287**  
**BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**

**Date: March 13, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

[Maryland Climate Partners](#) strongly supports **HB 1287**, which would clarify the authority of the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider cumulative environmental and public health impacts when evaluating applications under its jurisdiction. This bill is an important complement to Maryland's climate and environmental justice policies and supports more consistent implementation of the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA).

Maryland Climate Partners is a coalition of environmental, faith, consumer advocacy, and social justice organizations focused on the full and equitable implementation of the CSNA. The coalition formed in 2021 to support the passage of bold climate legislation, and we continue to advocate for policies that ensure Maryland has the tools and resources necessary to meet its climate commitments while protecting affordability and advancing equity.

One of the coalition's 2026 policy priorities is ensuring that state climate policies meaningfully **protect overburdened and underserved communities**, which have historically experienced disproportionate exposure to pollution and environmental hazards. **HB 1287** advances this priority by ensuring that infrastructure and energy-related decisions reflect cumulative, real-world impacts rather than narrow, project-by-project assessments.

Energy and utility infrastructure decisions can have long-lasting consequences for surrounding communities, particularly when facilities are sited in areas already experiencing elevated pollution burdens. **HB 1287** addresses this challenge by making clear that the PSC may consider cumulative impacts as part of its existing review processes. This clarification supports more comprehensive evaluations while remaining within the Commission's current statutory role.

Like its companion bill, **HB 1287** does not impose new mandates or predetermine outcomes. Instead, it provides the PSC with clearer direction on how to integrate cumulative impacts considerations into its decision-making, promoting consistency,

transparency, and alignment with state climate and equity laws. Clear statutory guidance also benefits applicants by establishing more predictable expectations for review.

Maryland is undertaking significant updates to its energy system to address aging infrastructure, reliability needs, and long-term cost considerations. As the Public Service Commission reviews these investments, cumulative impacts consideration is especially important to ensure decisions are informed by the full environmental and public health context in affected areas. **HB 1287** helps ensure that progress toward cleaner, more reliable energy does not overlook communities already facing significant environmental and public health challenges.

**HB 1287** represents a careful, forward-looking refinement of Maryland's regulatory framework. It strengthens implementation of existing law, supports equitable outcomes, and helps ensure that state energy decisions are informed by the full context in which they occur.

We strongly urge a favorable report on **HB 1287**.

**HB1287\_CHERISH PSC\_E&T\_CJW\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laurie McGilvray

Position: FAV



**Testimony on:** HB1287– Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)  
**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Organization:** Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing  
**Submitting:** Gwen DuBois  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** March 13, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB1287. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of 32 grassroots and professional organizations focused on climate justice, urges you to vote favorably on HB1287.

HB1287 would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk area to include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report describing and including information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the PSC to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

This bill addresses both environmental justice and health issues. First, the legacy of racism underlies the location of power plants, and this in turn, has led to the disproportionate exposure to harmful pollution in the surrounding communities. As early as 1940, and as late as 2019, evidence links historic red-lining to power plant siting, which in turn leads to a disproportionate burden on [communities of color](#) from the pollutants emitted by these power plants. In addition to power plants themselves, related activities [expose communities](#) to pollution from truck traffic, noise, water contamination and social disruption. Residents of Prince George’s County are fighting for their right to breathe clean air. Brandywine in particular, is exposed to inexcusable examples of [environmental and racial injustice](#). The community is 67% black and has 4 power plants. [They have had to fight against](#) another (gas fired) power plant coming to their area. In addition, diesel trucks, groundwater pollution from a military toxic waste dump, and PM2.5 from coal ash recently rated the [7<sup>th</sup> worst](#) such site in the nation. SB0780 requires the PSC to consider cumulative effects.

Second, health harms from mercury and other neurotoxins affect children who live near power plants. [Evidence](#) links neurobehavioral health problems to proximity to coal fired power plants and coal ash. Mercury and other neurotoxic pollutants are emitted from coal and oil fired power plants and are toxic to the [developing brain](#) especially in utero but also to infants and young children. Exposure to mercury from fish is [higher](#) in proximity to power plants, which would affect low income families eating a subsistence diet dependent on fishing. SB0780 requires the PSC to consider health risks.

Third, repeal of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mercury and Air Toxic (MAT) standards for power plants increases the need for a bill like CHERISH to protect the health of Marylanders. MAT standards saved 33 million dollars in [health costs](#) according to the EPA, and now those safeguards will be gone. The mercury standards repeal will worsen the disproportionate health effects on communities in proximity to power plants. According to the American Lung Association, it will “expose people to toxic pollution proven to harm brain development, trigger asthma attacks and cause cancer and premature death. In addition, weakening these protections will also place an [unfair burden](#) on the communities located nearest these polluting facilities, who already breathe too much unhealthy air.”

HB1287 will require the PSC to factor in health and environmental harms when issuing a CPCN in already overburdened communities. The weakening of EPA protections under the current administration increases the need for CHERISH to protect these very communities and especially the young children who grow up near power plants. For these reasons we urge a favorable vote in committee on HB1287.

350MoCo

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Earth Holders

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Law and Policy Project

Climate Communications Coalition

Climate Parents of Prince George’s

Climate Reality Greater Maryland

ClimateXChange

Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County

Echotopia

Elders Climate Action Maryland

Fix Maryland Rail

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Greenbelt Climate Action Network

HoCoClimateAction

Howard County Indivisible

Maryland Legislative Coalition

Maryland Energy Advocates

Maryland Third Act

Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund

Mobilize Frederick

Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Mountain Maryland Movement

Nuclear Information & Resource Service

Progressive Maryland

Safe & Healthy Playing Fields

Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

**HB1287 - CHERISH (PSC).pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Wharton

Position: FAV



HB1287 - SUPPORT  
Frances Stewart, MD  
Elders Climate Action Maryland  
[frances.stewart6@gmail.com](mailto:frances.stewart6@gmail.com)  
301-718-0446

HB1287 – Environmental Permits – Certificate of Public Convenience and  
Necessity – CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Meeting of the Environment and Transportation Committee

March 11, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee, on behalf of Elders Climate Action Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Elders Climate Action is a nationwide organization devoted to ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and future generations have a world in which they can thrive. The Maryland Chapter has members across the state.

Climate change is the main focus of our work, but we recognize air pollution as one of the greatest threats to our health. Also, climate change and air pollution share root causes.

Air pollution and its deadly effects are not evenly distributed. Many communities face much higher burdens and significantly worse health outcomes. Those communities are disproportionately underserved and have more vulnerable populations.

Fossil fuel burning power plants bring with them a host of environmental problems, including emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>, which have multiple negative impacts on our health. Coal-fired plants are also major emitters of mercury, which is particularly dangerous to children. The Environmental Protection Agency

recently repealed the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard for power plants, which increases the hazard.

Power plants are not evenly distributed throughout the state. They are often built near other polluting facilities, even other power plants. The effects of redlining are still apparent in Maryland today and often lead to disproportionate pollution burdens in communities of color.

For example, the residents of Brandywine in Prince George's County are 67% black. Their community is 67% black. In 2016, they had four power plants in their area and had to fight the addition of a fifth<sup>1</sup>.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act (Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Our Shared Health) is well named. It will address a critical gap in Maryland's environmental protection system. SB780 will require the Public Service Commission to factor in health and environmental harms when considering a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity in already overburdened communities. It is a logical and needed complement to HB1268, which requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to consider cumulative impact when issuing permits.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable report on HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Deaton, "In Maryland, One Community Is Taking a Stand against Environmental Racism," *Grist*, July 27, 2016, <https://grist.org/justice/in-maryland-one-community-is-taking-a-stand-against-environmental-racism/>.

# **Testimony FOR HB1287 LG.pdf**

Uploaded by: Linnie Girdner

Position: FAV

Dear Honorable Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton and Members of the Committee,

My name is Linda Girdner and I live in Gambrills, MD. I am writing to urge you to **support HB1287 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**.

Pollution generating facilities have been disproportionately and deliberately sited in minority and economically distressed communities in Maryland for at least 200 years. Dr. Robert Bullard coined the term “human sacrifice zone” to describe communities inundated by environmental justice (EJ) issues and polluting industries. Environmental justice is the indelible right to equitable environmental protection under the law; the ability to live safe, healthy, and productive lives; and possessing the decision-making power to effect positive environmental change. EJ, fenceline and frontline communities are homes, community centers, schools, and playgrounds that, similar to battlefields, have very real casualties and impacts upon quality of life.

Low-wealth, Black, and other communities of color in Maryland face greater cancer risks and exposure to air toxics due to higher pollution burden. For example, Johns Hopkins Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at the Bloomberg School of Public Health found that the coal terminal at Curtis Bay is a significant driver of air pollution burdens, providing data from their [study](#) that supports what Curtis Bay residents have reported for many years.

The CHERISH Act amends Maryland's environmental law to provide adequate environmental impact assessment and opportunities for public participation for new, renewed, and expanded environmental permits that are issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Currently, many environmental permit applications do not even include a public engagement process, and do not take into consideration the cumulative harms posed by multiple and historic sources of pollution. The CHERISH Act prioritizes Maryland residents' well-being and ensures that MDE's decision-making processes are transparent and inclusive.

The CHERISH Act builds on the robust conversations from the 2024 Legislative Session on HB 24/SB96, which passed ENT, ECM, and the House as whole but did not move in the Senate. Now it is your opportunity to weigh in on legislation that is in direct alignment with environmental justice goals set forth in Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction plan and in MDE's recent Climate Implementation Plan.

**Let us not continue “human sacrifice zones” in Maryland. Please vote favorable on HB1287 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act) in committee and on the floor.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Linda Girdner

Member, Showing Up for Racial Justice, Annapolis and Anne Arundel County

**260311\_Final\_Formatted CHERISH Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Madeline Rosenstein

Position: FAV

**Written Testimony in Support of House Bills 1268 & 1287**

CHERISH Our Communities Act  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
Hearing Date: March 13, 2026

March 11, 2026

To the Honorable Chair Marc Korman, Vice Chair Michele Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Access to Justice Clinic (Environmental Policy Division) within the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics of the George Washington University Law School, we write today in support of House Bills 1268 and 1287 Environmental Permits – Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation and Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – Burden Analysis (“CHERISH Our Communities Act” or “CHERISH Act”). As a law clinic we focus on addressing environmental justice issues that affect the health of low-income and marginalized communities. Maryland defines “environmental justice” as “equal protection from environmental and public health hazards for all people regardless of race, income, culture, and social status.”<sup>1</sup> The CHERISH Act is a great step towards environmental justice equity because it aims to reduce harmful cumulative impacts through establishing public participation processes and access to information.

Cumulative impacts occur “when multiple sources of pollution and other environmental stressors combine over time to cause adverse effects to human health and wellbeing.”<sup>2</sup> Exposures to harmful chemicals can come from products we use, discrete and disparate sources of pollution (such as factory emissions), and legacy pollution (such as mercury).<sup>3</sup> These chemicals can accumulate in the water, soil, and air, where communities live and recreate.<sup>4</sup> These accumulations oftentimes happen in overburdened areas, which are any census tracts with three or more specific environmental health indicators that are above Maryland’s 75<sup>th</sup> percentile.<sup>5</sup> Cumulative impacts disproportionately affect communities’ health in overburdened areas because of “systemic racism and unjust public policies.”<sup>6</sup> The CHERISH Act has the potential to disrupt these systemic issues by ensuring the affected communities are a part of the permitting process.

Multiple sources of pollution created by water pollution, air pollution, inadequate hazardous waste treatment, etc. produce harm to Maryland communities through cumulative impacts by exacerbating lung issues, carcinogenic impacts, low birth weight, and overall increased

<sup>1</sup> MD. CODE ANN., ENV’T, § 1-701(a)(5).

<sup>2</sup> NAT’L CAUCUS OF ENV’T LEGISLATORS, *Cumulative Impacts*, <http://ncel.net/issue/cumulative-impacts> (last visited Mar. 4, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS, *Cumulative Impacts Policies* (Oct. 16, 2024), <https://www.ucs.org/resources/cumulative-impacts-policies>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> MD. CODE ANN., ENV’T, § 1-701(a)(7).

<sup>6</sup> See UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS, *supra* note 3.

hospitalizations.<sup>7</sup> Asthma can be the product of cumulative impacts harm. In 2025, the American Lung Association released a “State of the Air” report, which showed that many people in Maryland were living in areas with dangerous levels of ozone and particle pollution.<sup>8</sup> These harms directly impact Maryland’s overburdened communities. For instance, Johns Hopkins’ Baltimore BREATHE Center reports that 20% of children in Baltimore City suffer from asthma.<sup>9</sup> This is over double the rate of national asthma numbers.<sup>10</sup> Across Maryland asthma related emergencies disproportionately affect Black children by almost four times the rate of white children.<sup>11</sup>

A majority of east Baltimore County has an MDEnviroScreen EJ Score in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher. “The MDEnviroScreen EJ score represents a combined measure of pollution and the potential vulnerability of a population to the effects of pollution.”<sup>12</sup> Baltimore County had the worst ozone smog in the metro area. This pollution has negative health impacts such as lower birth weights in babies and asthma attacks.<sup>13</sup> Impacts from oil and gas air pollution contributes to people’s health issues.<sup>14</sup> For instance, oil and gas pollution causes 90,000 premature deaths in the US each year.<sup>15</sup> The highest number of impacts per-capita incidences are seen in New Jersey, DC, New York, California, and *Maryland*.<sup>16</sup> The CHERISH Act incorporates the consideration of cumulative impacts into Maryland’s process of issuing permits to pollute and Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, similar to laws already passed in New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York. By doing so, the CHERISH Act aims to prevent the exacerbation of harmful impacts in overburdened areas.

The CHERISH Act would apply to specific overburdened areas – those within “at-risk” census tracts. The communities in at-risk census tracts currently do not have a meaningful opportunity to be a part of the process and the CHERISH Act aims to rectify that. The Acts describe at-risk census tracts as any geographic area within a 1.5-mile radius of the boundaries of overburdened, underserved, and specifically designated communities (e.g. populations with an EJ score at or above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile). Through House Bills 1268 and 1287, the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Public Service Commission cannot make determinations on projects without deliberative public input. The CHERISH Act would require a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (“BURDEN”) report when there is a new covered general permit, covered general permit renewal application, or a request for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. House Bills 1268 and 1287 would also require BURDEN reports to be made available to the public and include provisions for public comments. In allowing the public

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<sup>7</sup> See MD. DEP’T OF HEALTH, *Asthma*, <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/pages/asthma.aspx> (last visited Mar. 1, 2025); Dharna Noor, *Air Pollution from Oil and Gas Causes 90,000 Premature US Deaths Each Year, Says New Study*, GUARDIAN (Aug. 22, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/aug/22/air-pollution-oil-gas-health-study>.

<sup>8</sup> See AM. LUNG ASS’N, *New Report on Air Pollution in Maryland: For Ozone Smog, Thirteen of 15 Graded Counties Post Worse Results; All Graded Counties Post Worst Results for Both Daily & Year-Round Particle Pollution* (Apr. 23, 2025), <https://www.lung.org/media/press-releases/2025-md-sota>.

<sup>9</sup> THE BREATHE CENTER, <https://lunghealthdashboard.breathecenter.org> (last visited Mar. 5, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> MD. DEP’T OF HEALTH, *supra* note 7.

<sup>12</sup> MDEnviroScreen, MD. DEP’T OF THE ENV’T, [https://mde.maryland.gov/Environmental\\_Justice/Pages/MDEnviroScreen.aspx](https://mde.maryland.gov/Environmental_Justice/Pages/MDEnviroScreen.aspx) (last visited Mar. 1, 2026).

<sup>13</sup> See AM. LUNG ASS’N, *supra* note 8.

<sup>14</sup> Noor, *supra* note 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

to access the BURDEN reports, the CHERISH Act would provide the opportunity for more meaningful conversations around siting and potential impacts. Individuals living in Maryland, especially those in at-risk census tracts, deserve to be made aware of potential harmful impacts that may be introduced into their environment and threaten their health. Thus, it is imperative for them to have the opportunity to be heard when those threats are evaluated by regulators.

In closing, the Access to Justice Clinic (Environmental Policy Division) within the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics of the George Washington University Law School, supports favorable reports of House Bills 1268 and 1287 because these Acts are necessary for the health and wellness of communities in Maryland. The CHERISH Act would prioritize the needs of communities by providing information through BURDEN reports and the public participation processes. In the 2025 regular legislation session, there was a wave of support in the written testimonies by environmental justice communities and organizations for the previous CHERISH Act. 2026 should be the year to listen to environmental justice communities, to help those communities, to support the citizens of Maryland to have their voices be heard. We urge this committee to give House Bills 1268 and 1287 favorable reports.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Access to Justice Clinic (Environmental Policy Division) within the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics of the George Washington University Law School,

Biatrix Gazaryan, JD '26  
Madeline Rosenstien, JD '26

Please feel free to direct any questions to our clinic director, Prof. Taylor Lilley,  
t.lilley@law.gwu.edu.

*This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Access to Justice Clinic (Environmental Policy Division) within the Jacob Burns Community Legal Clinics of the George Washington University Law School Law Clinic, and not by The George Washington University Law School or the George Washington University.*

# **HB 1287 - National Aquarium - Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maggie Ostdahl

Position: FAV



# NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: March 13, 2026

Bill: HB 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Position: Support

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Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for HB 1287, which would update the permitting process for Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for new or expanding polluting energy generation. This legislation is part of the CHERISH Our Communities Act package that is crucially necessary to protect vulnerable communities and live up to Maryland's environmental justice commitments.

The National Aquarium connects people with nature to inspire compassion and care for our ocean planet. Our three overarching strategic goals to combat climate change, stop plastic pollution, and save wildlife and habitats are guided by principles of equity and environmental justice. For more than a decade, the National Aquarium has collaborated with neighbors from Baltimore's Brooklyn and Curtis Bay communities and other partners through the Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, restoring access to and offering year-round educational programming on over 100 acres of remediated land and water. Masonville Cove is adjacent to several communities of Baltimore residents who historically and presently bear a disproportionate share of the impacts of industrial pollution. In Baltimore and beyond, industrial facilities are often concentrated in or near communities of color and economically distressed areas, and people living there inequitably and unjustly experience cumulative impacts of pollution from those facilities.

Together with HB 1268, this bill addresses gaps in the state's current process for evaluating and permitting polluting facilities by better incorporating considerations of cumulative impacts of pollution and follows best practices from legislation passed in other states. Accounting for cumulative impacts in permitting decisions and setting strict guidelines for community engagement is overdue and necessary to fulfill the state's commitment to environmental justice, public health, and the well-being of all Marylanders.

**We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1287.**

Contact:

**Maggie Ostdahl**

Director of Conservation Policy

410-385-8275

mostdahl@aqua.org

**HB1287\_Marta Orellana\_Fav\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Marta Orellana

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Marta Orellana

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Marta Orellana, and I have been a resident of Baltimore City's District 46 for the past 17 years. I am a mother of two children—one of whom lives with both asthma and autism and I am deeply committed to advocating for environmental justice and healthier communities.

I am writing today in strong support of HB1287 – the CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is personal to me and my family. My youngest son's asthma is directly affected by the quality of the air he breathes every day. Too often, families like mine live in neighborhoods already burdened by pollution, yet we continue to face new environmental risks without adequate protections.

Communities like ours have been overlooked for too long. We are exposed to multiple sources of pollution that accumulate over time and create serious health risks for our children and neighbors. The CHERISH Our Communities Act is a critical step toward ensuring that the Maryland Department of the Environment fully considers the cumulative impacts of pollution when reviewing permits and making decisions that affect our communities.

By supporting this bill, you are helping protect families who are already facing environmental and health challenges. You are also taking an important step toward ensuring that every Maryland child regardless of their zip code has the opportunity to grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1287 and stand with families like mine who deserve clean air, healthier neighborhoods, and stronger protections for our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Marta Orellana

**HB 1287 FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maryrose Wilson

Position: FAV

## **HB 1287 FAV**

### **Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

#### **Environment and Transportation**

**Hearing: March 10, 2026**

Dear Committee Members,

The CHERISH Act ensures that the PSC obtains the data needed to make an informed decision on a permit, with a Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) Report. The Act also ensures that communities have a voice in the permitting process. The CHERISH Act is targeted and limited and applies best practices from similar legislation in other states.

Pollution negatively impacts health. Multiple, cumulative sources of pollution in the community increase cancer risk, shorten lifespans, and worsen overall health. Some communities in Maryland have faced this situation acutely and for far too long. The communities facing the most pollution in Maryland require additional state-level protections to prevent them from becoming exposed to even greater pollution and to reduce their current exposure. The CHERISH Act is the answer to this.

The CHERISH Act would address a critical gap in our environmental protection system. When multiple pollution sources combine, the harm can multiply. That often means even worse public health outcomes for areas bearing the burden of pollution. Maryland doesn't currently make permitting decisions for environmental justice considerations like these. Permits are considered in isolation, without evaluating the total, or cumulative, impact of surrounding permitted facilities or the socioeconomic status of nearby communities.

True environmental justice means putting community needs first, by considering factors like a community's existing pollution load and community health data when weighing permit decisions. This legislation would create a fairer system – one where community voices are part of permitting decisions that affect their health and well-being. In 2026, Maryland has an opportunity to show bold leadership and truly “leave no one behind.” It's a chance to align our values with real, actionable policy that protects vulnerable communities. It's time to respond to community demands and fix that.

The CHERISH Act would modernize Maryland's permitting system to more accurately affect people's lived experiences and protect communities that already face heavy pollution burdens.

I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Maryrose Wilson

12102 Coppermine Road Union Bridge MD 21791

**HB 1287 - CBF - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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## House Bill 1287

### Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

**Date:** March 13, 2026  
**To:** Environment & Transportation Committee

**Position:** **FAVORABLE**  
**From:** Gussie Maguire,  
MD Staff Scientist

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 1287** which requires applicants for Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for certain types of energy generation to include a Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs or BURDEN Report. The requirement does not apply to clean, renewable energy generation at wind, solar, or geothermal stations.

BURDEN Reports must include the EJ scores for census tracts within 1.5 miles of the site and include existing pollution sources impacting at-risk census tracts as well as existing public health stressors. CPCN applications for energy generation facilities that would worsen those stressors could only be approved if the project would serve a public interest in the at-risk census tract in which it is located.

This bill responds to historic inequities, where poor communities, often communities of color, have been forced to share space with disproportionate numbers of industrial facilities, landfills, incinerators, power plants, and other pollution sources. Overburdened communities face health impacts as well as damage and lack of safe access to natural spaces. Emissions and discharges from multiple facilities within a single watershed place undue stress on the waterway and its surroundings. Requiring an analysis of the environmental and health burdens already impacting an area will help the Public Service Commission make informed decisions about where it can responsibly allow for additional emissions and other impacts of energy generation.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1287.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*

# **CHERISH House Sign-on Testimony\_EHE Student Body.p**

Uploaded by: Matthew Aubourg

Position: FAV

**Testimony Supporting HB1268 & HB1287**  
**House Environment and Transportation (ENT) Committee**  
**March 13, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT / FAVORABLE**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit **favorable** testimony for the record in support of **HB1268 & HB1287–the CHERISH Our Communities Act**. The undersigned are 44 undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering (EHE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). Our scholarship spans both the Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Whiting School of Engineering at JHU. Through technical and applied training, we develop expertise in cumulative risk assessment, evaluation of chemical mixture exposures, and the fenceline community and occupational health effects of pollution, along with other essential competencies to protect and promote environmental and occupational health. The opinions expressed herein are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Johns Hopkins University. Based on our collective experience and training, **we write to you in strong support of HB1268 & HB1287–the CHERISH Our Communities Act.**

The CHERISH Act is community-led legislation rooted in the legacy of environmental justice action here in Maryland to protect frontline communities from the cumulative impacts of pollution. We assert and discuss further herein that the CHERISH Act is a health-protective and well-designed bill which:

- 1) Translates community testimony directly into responsive regulatory action and improved opportunities for meaningful public participation;*
- 2) Aligns with the state of public and environmental health science; and*
- 3) Is informed by the state of environmental regulatory practice as demonstrated in multiple other states and jurisdictions.*

***1) Translates community testimony directly into responsive regulatory action and improved opportunities for meaningful public participation.***

From the neighboring communities of industrial poultry production in the Eastern Shore of Maryland, to the residents at the frontline of a myriad of stationary and mobile industrial polluters in South Baltimore, and elsewhere in our state, residents in fenceline communities have reported the disproportionate health and quality of life burdens of pollution for decades.<sup>1-7</sup> The CHERISH Act is focused in such areas, applying only to communities

identified as overburdened by environmental pollution and compounding non-chemical stressors using the MDEnviroScreen EJ Score.<sup>8</sup>

Currently, there are multiple permit application processes that residents cannot provide any input on, even though such permits may allow polluters to poison these residents' backyards. More than half of MD air pollution permits have **no** required public comment periods or hearings for potentially impacted community members to have their voices heard and valued. The CHERISH Act addresses this by expanding public participation processes for permit applications and renewals currently without them in geographic areas covered by the Act.

## ***2) Aligns with the state of public and environmental health science.***

The science is clear and unequivocal: air, water, and land pollution are core drivers of community and individual-level mortality and morbidity, and these health impacts can amplify or be amplified by socioeconomic and structural harms.<sup>9-14</sup> Air pollution and heavy metal contamination, for instance, have been linked to increased cancer risk, neurodevelopmental and psychosocial harms, and respiratory and cardiovascular disease.<sup>11,15-19</sup> Both environmental exposures and structural burdens are borne disproportionately in communities of color and communities with lower wealth. Residents in these impacted areas have described and reported this for decades, and the science is aligning with the lived understanding of how environmental exposures interact with non-chemical stressors.

The CHERISH Act will require applicants of specific permits to submit a **Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, And Environmental Needs** or **BURDEN Report** using already existing and publicly accessible data for evaluation of additional environmental or health burdens in already at-risk areas. The majority of BURDEN Report data inputs are readily available in the MDEnviroScreen Tool and the remainder are already expected for a permit application, ensuring a quick and straightforward process to develop the BURDEN Report. Members of our student/postdoctoral research body are committed to supporting this methodology development process and communication using our environmental health expertise.

## ***3) Is informed by the state of environmental regulatory practice as demonstrated in multiple other states and jurisdictions.***

The current environmental regulatory regime in Maryland issues permits to individual facilities without consideration of that facility's contribution to the combined impacts of multiple polluters in a single area. By and large, these areas are communities of color and communities of lower wealth due to the entrenched histories of redlining and inequitable zoning and land use practices.<sup>20,21</sup> Multiple states and city-level jurisdictions around the United States (e.g., New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Chicago) have passed

and implemented cumulative impacts legislation to meet the on-the-ground and scientifically-informed realities of pollution. For example, New Jersey's Environmental Justice Law on cumulative impacts is in implementation and has already won against legal challenges from polluting industry interests.<sup>22,23</sup> There is already a clear track record nationally of implementing legislation to better protect impacted communities, codify environmental justice commitments (i.e., Gov. Wes Moore singing Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity [VOICE] Executive Order in 2025)<sup>24,25</sup>, and hold polluters accountable.

The CHERISH Act prevents new polluters from being built in environmental justice communities if the Maryland Department of the Environment determines—through a deliberative public process with public input—that allowing it to be built would contribute to a disproportionate pollution and health burden on the nearby community. It also will reduce pollution from existing facilities when their permits are being renewed, if MDE determines that facility is contributing to a disproportionate pollution and health burden on the nearby community.

Right now, Maryland has a critical opportunity to be a champion for environmental health and justice, particularly in a national landscape when champions are needed more than ever. Thank you again for this opportunity and **we urge a favorable report on HB1268 & HB1287—the CHERISH Our Communities Act.**

Sincerely,

**Matthew A. Aubourg, MSPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Elizabeth A. Chatpar, ScM** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Olivia M. Ventresca** – MS in Occupational and Environmental Hygiene, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Harshitha Lingegowda, MBBS** – ScM in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Erin E. Bennett, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Hannah Greene, BA** – MHS in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Shilpi Misra, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Sonia Dhawan, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Morgan K Steiner, BS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Gabriela Sarmiento, MSPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Rebecca Shade, MHS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Grant Tore, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Andrew C. Vargas, BS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Shifali Mathews, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Katherine M. Marquess, PhD, MA, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Natalie S. Armstrong, MHS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**William S. Daniels, PhD** – Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Charles Bakin, MS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Dionne Mitcham, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Megan Simonsen** – PhD in Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Julianne Chan** – PhD in Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Zachary T. Kralles, PhD** – Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Ayreanna Pettijohn, BS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Mei-Li Hey, MS** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Rashida Callender, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Oscar Lopez, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Brittany Brown, PhD** – Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Daniel Ukaegbu, B.EMT** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Dylan C. Gaeta, PhD** – PhD in Geography and Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Shayna Demick** – ScM in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Isabella Umali-Grawe** – MHS Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Hyomin Lee, M.S.** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Corina Mills** – MHS Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Salvatore Milletich, MPH** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Biak Tial, MSc** – PhD in Health Security, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Gianna Murphy** – BS in Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Janelle Larsen, MS** – MS in Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Kathryn Brinkman** – MS in Toxicology for Human Risk Assessment, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Sanaa Dixon** – BS in Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Juny Lee** – BS in Environmental Engineering, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering

**Loren Ayers, BS** – ScM in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**David Park** – PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Alex Rittenhouse** – MD-PhD in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Tabassum Mehnaz** – ScM in Environmental Health, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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# **HB1287Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michael Brown

Position: FAV

Date: March 11, 2026

From: Michael Brown  
10 Southway Unit R  
Greenbelt, MD 20770

To Environmental and Transportation Committee in the MGA House of Delegates

## Subject: HB 1287 -- Favorable without Amendments

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Environmental and Transportation Committee,

My name is Michael Brown, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of **HB1287/SB0780**, the “**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**.” I am here because I believe Maryland has a responsibility to ensure that no community is treated as expendable when it comes to environmental risk and public health. HB1287 is a measured, data-driven step toward honoring that responsibility.

At its core, this bill does something very simple but very important: it asks us to look at the **whole** picture of what certain neighborhoods are already carrying before we decide whether to place yet **another high-impact facility** there. For decades, many communities—often lower-income communities and communities of color—have found themselves surrounded by power plants, landfills, industrial sites, and heavy traffic corridors. Each facility, **taken alone**, may have been deemed “acceptable,” but residents live with the sum of all of them at once. HB1287 recognizes that people experience cumulative burden, not isolated permits, and it brings our decision-making closer to that lived reality.

HB1287 **focuses on non-renewable generating stations and similar high-impact facilities in “at-risk” census tracts**. These are not arbitrary labels. The bill relies on Maryland’s own environmental justice screening tools and concrete indicators—**pollution levels, proximity to major emitting sources, and health-related stressors**—to identify communities that are already disproportionately burdened. That makes this legislation both fair and targeted: it does not stop development everywhere; it simply insists that, in the places where the deck is already stacked against residents, we slow down, gather the facts, and be more careful.

One of the most important features of HB1287 is the required **BURDEN report**. This is not mere paperwork. It is a structured way to answer basic, commonsense questions that residents ask every time a new plant is proposed: **How much pollution is already here?** What kinds of facilities surround us? What are the existing risks from air, water, and soil? How loud and disruptive is it already, and how much more will this project add? The BURDEN report gathers this information within a defined radius and presents it in one place, in a standardized way. That kind of **transparency** empowers both the Public Service Commission and the people who live in these neighborhoods to make informed judgments, instead of being forced to piece together information from scattered technical filings.

HB1287 also **rightly raises the bar** for approval in these at-risk communities. Under the bill, the Public Service Commission must look squarely at whether a proposed plant will cause or worsen environmental and health stressors in an already overburdened area. It must ask whether the project truly serves the public interest of that community, not just whether it fits into a statewide capacity plan or a company's business model. And when the Commission does approve a project in an at-risk tract, it must attach conditions designed to protect public health and the environment.

This change in default is crucial. **For too long, the burden of proof has effectively rested on residents to show why they should not be asked to absorb "one more" facility.** HB1287 begins to flip that script. It says to applicants: if you want to build in a community that is already carrying a heavy load, you must demonstrate clearly why this project is necessary and how it will be made as safe as possible. That is not anti-business; it is simply responsible governance.

I also want to emphasize that **HB1287 is consistent with Maryland's clean energy and climate goals.** The bill explicitly exempts solar, wind, and geothermal generation from the BURDEN analysis requirement. That means our fastest-growing, lowest-emission energy sources are not slowed by this new process. Instead, the bill focuses on the types of projects that are most likely to add air pollution, noise, and other health stressors. In other words, HB1287 is aligned with a just transition: it **protects vulnerable communities from additional fossil-fuel burdens while allowing clean energy projects to move forward more readily.**

Some may worry that this bill will deter investment or make it harder to maintain grid reliability. Those concerns deserve to be taken seriously, but they should not be exaggerated. HB1287 does not impose an absolute ban on non-renewable generation in at-risk tracts. It creates a more rigorous process that incorporates cumulative impact, requires fuller information, and demands real public-interest justification and protective conditions. If a project is truly vital for reliability, and if it can be designed and conditioned to minimize harm, the statute still allows it. What is no longer

acceptable is building by default, without fully accounting for who pays the price and how high that price already is.

In my view, HB1287 also **strengthens public trust** in our institutions. Communities that feel ignored or sacrificed are less likely to believe that government acts in their interest, and that mistrust has real consequences. When residents see that their lived experience—of asthma, noise, odors, and industrial encroachment—is reflected in law and in regulatory decisions, it sends a powerful signal that their **health and dignity matter**. That trust is a form of **civic infrastructure** just as vital as substations and transmission lines.

Finally, HB1287 reflects a **simple moral principle: no community should be asked, again and again, to accept environmental risks that others would never tolerate in their own backyards**. By grounding that principle in data, process, and clear standards, this bill offers a practical way to move toward environmental justice while maintaining a reliable energy system.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB1287. Thank you for your time and consideration, and for your commitment **to protecting the health and well-being of Maryland's communities**.

**HB1287\_Nathaly Montufar\_FAV\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nathaly Montufar

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Nathaly Montufar

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Nathaly Montufar, I am 15 years old, and I am an 8th grade student at Sonia Sotomayor Middle School. I live in Langley Park, in District 47. I am a part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and communities across Maryland.

This legislation would make decisions fairer and more protective of communities that are already dealing with high levels of pollution. Right now, permits for new facilities are reviewed one at a time, without fully considering the total or cumulative pollution in an area. This means that neighborhoods already carrying a heavy pollution burden can end up with even more harmful facilities nearby.

CHERISH Our Community Act would allow agencies like the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider environmental justice data when deciding whether to approve or deny permits. That's important because it focuses on real health impacts people are experiencing.

The CHERISH Act is very important to our Community and environment because it requires evaluating pollution from nearby sources, adding stronger conditions to approved permits, and ensures meaningful community participation in decisions. In practical terms, it gives residents a voice and helps prevent more damage before it happens by reducing cumulative pollution and prioritizing public health, especially in overburdened areas.

CHERISH Our Community Act would improve air and water quality, protect families' health, and create a more just system for everyone in Maryland.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1287 so that all Maryland families, especially children, can grow up in healthier, safer environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaly Montufar

# **HB1287 - Fav Neka (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Neka Duckett-Randolph

Position: FAV



## OUT FOR JUSTICE

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1287:

TO: Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Out For Justice, Inc.

DATE: 3/10/26

Greetings Chair Korman and members of the committee. My name is Neka Duckett-Randolph, and I am the resident environmentalist at Out For Justice, a member-led grassroots organization dedicated to engaging, educating, and empowering communities to build power to dismantle harmful systems of oppression. Out for Justice strongly supports HB1287, the CHERISH Act.

As an organization that has long advocated for the rights and dignity of individuals impacted by the legal system, **Out For Justice** proudly stands at the intersection of **environmental justice** and **criminal justice reform**. The carceral system and environmental injustice are not separate, isolated issues. They are inextricably linked, particularly for impoverished communities of color, and, more specifically, Black communities. We understand the carceral community is a **frontline environmental justice community**. Black and Brown individuals who have been criminalized—especially those from within Baltimore’s Black Butterfly neighborhoods—often face compounded environmental hazards, both within and outside the prison walls.

Across our state residents experience firsthand the consequences of environmental degradation. Flooding worsened by unchecked development, declining air quality near industrial sites, and contaminated waterways are not abstract environmental concerns; they are daily public safety issues. When stormwater systems fail, families lose homes. When air pollution increases, asthma rates rise. When water systems are compromised, public health emergencies follow. Public safety must be understood not only as crime prevention, but as protection from preventable harm.

Community input is essential to addressing these challenges effectively. Residents possess critical, localized knowledge about flooding patterns, pollution exposure, infrastructure weaknesses, and cumulative impacts. Without structured and meaningful opportunities for community participation, state-level decisions risk overlooking real-world conditions on the ground.

When communities are heard early and often:

- Projects are better designed.
- Environmental risks are more accurately assessed.
- Public opposition decreases.
- Implementation becomes more efficient and equitable.

Maryland has long positioned itself as a leader in environmental protection. Protecting the health of the Chesapeake Bay and strengthening climate resilience efforts demonstrate the state's recognition that environmental policy and public safety are inseparable. HB1287 continues that legacy by ensuring that those most affected by environmental decisions have a voice in shaping them.

**Public safety is not only about responding to emergencies, it is about preventing them.** Environmental degradation, left unchecked and unexamined by impacted communities, increases risks that are avoidable with thoughtful planning and inclusive governance. **Strengthening community input mechanisms is not merely a procedural improvement, it is a public safety imperative.**

For these reasons, Out For Justice respectfully urges a favorable report on HB1287, the CHERISH Act.

# **HB1287 CHERISH Fav - Angel Cook.pdf**

Uploaded by: Neka Duckett-Randolph

Position: FAV



## 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

# **2026-03-10 Labruto Heaney CHERISH Act Public Comme**

Uploaded by: Nicole Labruto

Position: FAV



**Testimony Supporting HB1268 and HB1287  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
March 10, 2026**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

*The views expressed below are our own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University/Johns Hopkins Health System.*

As co-chairs of the **Environmental Justice and Community Partnerships (EJCP) Committee** of the Sustainability Leadership Council (SLC) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU), and as residents of Maryland, we write to **express our strong support of HB1268 and HB1287**, the CHERISH Our Communities Act (including the Public Service Commission version of the bill).

The EJCP Committee serves in a leadership, convening, and guidance capacity for university-wide academic, research, and operational activities that can positively impact environmental justice through the depth and breadth of JHU's capacities and partnerships. Communities of color and low-income communities bear a disproportionate and adverse environmental and health burden from pollution. The current regulatory framework in Maryland considers the emission of environmental pollutants one permit at a time, in isolation, whereas residents of overburdened, low-income communities and communities of color experience the adverse environmental and health impacts from the totality of pollutant emissions across numerous permitted facilities. Foundational to the efforts of the EJCP Committee is a goal to improve understanding and identify opportunities to mitigate the cumulative impacts and disproportionate and adverse burdens of pollution on the health and the environment, locally in Baltimore, across our state, and worldwide. *Herein, we provide:*

1. Information about the EJCP Committee's positionality and role within JHU and its community partnerships;
2. Steps JHU has taken to understand and meaningfully integrate principles and practices of environmental justice in the promulgation of its new Climate Action & Sustainability Plan;
3. An example of how JHU has integrated the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice<sup>1</sup> into institutional, university-wide decision-making and operational practices; and
4. Examples of the EJCP's partnership work with overburdened communities and how they would benefit from the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

**1) EJCP Committee at JHU:**

As co-chairs of the JHU EJCP Committee, we support the CHERISH Our Communities Act. Our support is informed by the EJCP's academic, research, policy, and operations work at JHU. Dr. Christopher D. Heaney, Associate Professor of Environmental Health and Engineering, co-leader of the Community Engagement Core of the Center for Community Health: Addressing Regional Maryland Environmental Determinants of Disease (CHARMED), and Director of the



Community Science and Innovation for Environmental Justice (CSI EJ) Initiative, leads research addressing community identified environmental health and justice concerns in South Baltimore and Maryland's eastern shore related to the cumulative burdens of air, land, and water pollution. Dr. Nicole Labruto is the faculty director of JHU's Medicine, Science, and the Humanities Program, and has long worked as an academic advocate for community organizations seeking environmental justice on their terms. She works and teaches on environmental racism, food and land justice, and zero waste efforts. The EJCP Committee is comprised of leaders from across JHU, including the Provost's Office, University Administration, Student Affairs, Office of Climate and Sustainability, Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, School of Education, School of Medicine, Whiting School of Engineering, and Bloomberg School of Public Health. The EJCP Committee aims to elevate cross-university engagement and community partnerships to address critical environmental justice issues in Baltimore, across Maryland, and worldwide.

## **2) Environmental justice as a priority of the Climate Action & Sustainability Plan:**

As JHU planned and implemented a new Climate Action & Sustainability Plan <sup>2</sup>, the importance of environmental justice and community engagement was evident at each step of the process. Throughout the planning process, community partners and stakeholders on the community advisory board (CAB) provided critical input on the priorities and perspectives of local residents and organizations and advocated for JHU to prioritize and meaningfully integrate the principles and practice of environmental justice into its academics, research, practice, and operations. EJ arose as a focal issue in terms of JHU's impact in Baltimore – and led to a pledge of JHU's business support and organic wastes streams to support a local composting infrastructure in Baltimore with regional community partners that adheres to community and worker standards.

## **3) JHU Environmental Justice (EJ) Decision-Making Prompts:**

The [JHU EJ Decision-Making Prompts](#)<sup>3</sup> are a set of considerations and actions based on the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice<sup>1</sup>, drafted and adopted in 1991 at the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. These principles have guided the global environmental justice movement since they were released. The EJCP Committee used them as a template to create a set of EJ prompts that faculty and staff can use to guide research, operations, and community engagement decisions such that they take into consideration the political, economic and cultural involvement and wellbeing of all people potentially impacted by the university's projects and commitments. We encourage the State to consider these same principles of EJ as a foundational framework for its review of permits for environmental pollution emissions – by the totality of their impacts rather than individually – on overburdened communities.

## **4) Examples of EJCP Committee's partnerships that highlight the importance and benefits of adopting a cumulative impacts framework as outlined in the CHERISH Our Communities Act:**

*Cumulative Impacts in South Baltimore, Maryland*

Dr. Heaney and members of the EJCP have partnered with the South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT), the Community of Curtis Bay Association (CCBA), and the South Baltimore 7 (SB7) Coalition to provide scientific and technical support that addresses their community-identified concerns with environmental pollution from roughly 70 facilities regulated by air pollutant permits from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). These include a coal export terminal, solid waste incinerator, medical waste incinerator, wastewater treatment plant, municipal landfill, chemical manufacturing plant, oil and gas facilities, among others. The operating permits of these facilities are regulated individually rather than through a framework of their cumulative impacts that acknowledges the existing burden on community members. Our scientific and technical investigations with SBCLT have provided critical answers to community concerns about the presence of coal dust in their neighborhood, the frequency of visible black smoke emissions from the Curtis Bay medical waste incinerator, and overall community air pollution burden. Additionally, South Baltimore residents in partnership with members of the JHU community have documented several decades of industrial explosions, leaks, spills, and other disasters impacting quality of life and mental health in the area.<sup>4</sup> However, our efforts address the tip of the iceberg among the 70 facilities permitted to emit air pollutants in the community. For example, we estimated health costs associated with air pollutant emissions from just two of these 70 facilities – Baltimore’s municipal solid waste incinerator and medical waste incinerator – to be \$97 million annually. The adoption of the CHERISH Our Communities Act would account for the existing environmental burden in South Baltimore, including facilities regulated not just for pollutant emissions to air, but also water and land. The EJCP Committee will continue to partner with South Baltimore communities to provide scientific and technical responses to the reality of their daily lived experiences with cumulative, disproportionate, and adverse impacts.

#### *JHU’s commitment to divert medical waste from Curtis Bay Energy, LP*

In March 2024, JHU announced at a Baltimore City Council hearing that it would divert medical waste from Curtis Bay Energy, LP. This announcement came after MDE and the Maryland Attorney General announced \$1.75 million criminal penalty for violations at the facility<sup>5</sup>; and a collaborative investigation by SBCLT and JHU scientists documented ongoing visible black smoke emissions at the facility after this state investigation. This operational decision demonstrated JHU’s support for and commitment to mitigating disproportionate and adverse impacts in overburdened communities of Baltimore. The decision was advocated for and supported by the EJCP Committee and many faculty members, staff, and students.

#### *Cumulative impacts on Maryland’s Eastern Shore*

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, food animal production has shifted from smaller farms to the confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) model that concentrates animals and their waste in small areas, threatening air and water quality. The Eastern Shore of Maryland, including Eastern Shore counties in Delaware (DE) and Virginia (VA), are host to a plethora of poultry CAFOs and related infrastructure such as poultry processing plants, biofuel transition stations, and other waste-to-energy projects, which release pollutants to air, water, and land in the communities situated near these facilities. Almost 300,000,000 chickens from this agriculturally dense area

were sold in 2017<sup>6</sup>, generating large amounts of waste and other pollutants such as particulate matter (PM), ammonia and nitrogen that pollute the air, soil, and water of neighboring rural communities.<sup>7-10</sup> The 600+ industrial poultry operations in Sussex County, Delaware, produce approximately 200,000,000 chickens each year. In more recent years, the CAFO biogas industry has been hailed in the region as a “green” solution to the waste problems of the livestock agricultural industry. However, manure is converted to energy through the production of biomethane from manure digesters, further polluting the air and affecting health and quality of life of communities who live proximal to these facilities.<sup>8</sup> Health effects related to proximity to poultry CAFOs are one of the main concerns for the residents of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Studies have found that proximity to more and larger poultry operations could increase the risk of community acquired pneumonia and is associated with reduced gestation time and birth weight.<sup>11-14</sup> Air pollution from CAFOs has been recognized as an environmental and public health concern by the National Academy of Sciences<sup>15</sup>, the US-GAO<sup>16</sup>, and the Pew Commission on Industrial Food Animal Production<sup>17</sup>. Although CAFO air pollution contributes to regional ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) deposition and greenhouse gases emissions, fence-line neighbors in rural communities across the U.S. are most directly affected by harmful particles and gases emitted from storage and land application of animal waste and from confinement barns.<sup>15</sup> CAFO air emissions result in episodic exposures that affect neighbors because of their malodorous and irritant properties. Concerns of dispersion and dissemination of antimicrobial resistance arise from the common use of antimicrobial and arsenical drugs in swine and poultry CAFOs.<sup>17</sup> Further, there has been increased awareness of the cumulative impacts and adverse interactions between air pollution and respiratory infectious diseases, such as the COVID-19 pandemic’s disproportionate and adverse impact on low income, vulnerable populations experiencing greater burden of air pollution.<sup>18</sup> The critical importance of accounting for cumulative impacts, including infectious diseases is further exemplified by the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on livestock industry workers<sup>19</sup> as well as the ongoing rise in concern with the H5N1 influenza A virus outbreak affecting poultry and other livestock industry workers. Biosecurity concerns with epidemic and pandemic pathogen reassortment and spillover between poultry and humans living at the fence-line in rural areas of Maryland’s Eastern Shore would benefit from risk mitigation approaches that account for the cumulative and interactive effects between environmental, infectious, and other agents and stressors.

The distribution of the poultry industry across MD and DE disproportionately impacts low-income communities and communities of color, as CAFOs are located in counties with some of the lowest wealth in the state. Increases in median household income are associated with a reduction in the number of CAFOs nearby.<sup>20,21</sup> Recent permitting of poultry waste-to-energy sites in the Delmarva Peninsula has disproportionately impacted the Haitian Creole and Latinx populations who live in the communities most proximal to these facilities. In addition to CAFOs, residents of these communities now must contend with issues due to CAFO manure digesters and biogas. The process used in manure-to-energy conversion generates harmful air contaminants and perpetuates the expansion of legacy industrial livestock production practices and infrastructure that remains harmful to the environment and surrounding communities.<sup>8</sup> Our community partners at the Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health (SESH) and Sussex Health and Environmental Network (SHEN) have been requesting changes in Maryland state permitting to account for the *existing burden* and *cumulative impacts* of high density industrial livestock production in any new environmental permits or permit renewals. The CHERISH Our



Communities Act would take critical steps towards mitigating the cumulative environmental burdens of our community partners on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

*Cumulative Impacts in Govans, Baltimore City, Maryland*

When a human crematory was proposed to be built in the dense, lower-income residential neighborhood of Govans, the York Road Partnership, a community association that spans over 20 Baltimore City neighborhoods, took action. We researched the known public health impacts of human crematoria, circulated the information, and enlisted community members to take public action through hearing attendance, letter writing, and calls to elected officials. Dozens of letters and several hearings against the issuing of the permit ended in frustration: in December 2024, the permit was granted despite vehement community desires for it to be denied. Residents now have no recourse to transparency for a facility that will emit lead, mercury, and other toxins. The CHERISH Our Communities Act would make sure that information is easily available when it impacts our neighborhood and our health.

*Collaborative Research, Teaching, and Project Development for Food and Land Sovereignty in South Baltimore*

Black neighborhoods in Baltimore suffer disproportionately high rates of food apartheid, which correlate with increased comorbidities and lower life expectancy. Food apartheid is a term that describes geographic areas that lack access to affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate food because of racially discriminatory and segregationist policies. Baltimore's Black Yield Institute (BYI) is leading the way in providing healthy food access to South Baltimore neighborhoods and working toward food and land sovereignty through urban farming, farmers markets, supply chain modification, educational programs, and community events. Nicole Labruto and other members of JHU have partnered with BYI to produce scholarship on the historical and sociological dimensions of food apartheid, and to generate an academic-community toolkit for identifying existing and potential community assets for combatting food apartheid conditions. Labruto has co-taught political education courses with BYI's director Brother Eric Jackson, and together with students they have secured grant funding to expand BYI's food supply chain modification efforts through land acquisition for the purpose of creating a site for food production and distribution. Sustained partnership between BYI and JHU has generated meaningful impacts on the quest for food and land justice in South Baltimore.

Based on our experience as co-chairs of the JHU EJCP Committee and as demonstrated by the above examples, we support the CHERISH Our Communities Act and encourage passage of this bill. The benefits of meaningful integration of these principles into institutional practices via the CHERISH Our Communities Act would promote the environment, health and safety of Maryland's most overburdened residents, in alignment with EJ goals in Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan<sup>22</sup> and MDE's Agency Climate Implementation Plan<sup>23</sup>. Building upon our longstanding partnerships with Maryland community-based organizations and state environmental regulatory agencies, we also commit to supporting—where possible—the implementation of the CHERISH Our Communities Act such as methodological recommendations for “Environmental Impact Statements” and “Existing Burden Reports.”



Through the CHERISH Our Communities Act, Maryland is presented with a key opportunity to be a national leader in advancing environmental justice and ensure improved equity, health, and quality of life for its residents.

**Christopher D. Heaney, PhD, MS**

Associate Professor, Environmental Health & Engineering, Epidemiology, International Health  
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

**Nicole Labruto, PhD**

Associate Teaching Professor, Program in Medicine, Science, and the Humanities;  
Anthropology; Environmental Studies

Research Co-Lead, Institute for Planetary Health

Krieger School of Arts and Science

Johns Hopkins University

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**HB1287\_Paulina Molina\_FAV\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Paulina Molina

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Paulina Molina

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Paulina Molina, I am 24 years old, and I am an undergrad student at the University of Maryland, College Park. I live in New Carrollton, in District 22. I am a new member of CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1287 - CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and surrounding communities across Maryland.

Bill HB1287 will allow for decisions to be fairer and will take into account the communities that are already suffering from high levels of pollution. Right now, permits for new facilities are reviewed one at a time, without fully considering the already tainted air quality in the area. This means that neighborhoods already carrying a heavy pollution burden can end up with even more harmful facilities nearby. It is common knowledge that pollution and harmful air quality can lead to many health concerns, specifically respiratory issues, such as asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

CHERISH Our Community Act would allow agencies like Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider environmental justice data when deciding whether to approve or deny permits. By doing so, agencies will have to factor in real health problems and keep in mind that individuals and families are living near polluting facilities.

This bill is vital for keeping our community and environment safe because it requires evaluating pollution from nearby sources, adds stronger protections to approved permits, and ensures meaningful community participation in decision-making. It allows residents to have a voice and helps prevent unnecessary harm. The bill also reduces cumulative pollution and prioritizes public health, especially in overburdened areas.

CHERISH Our Community Act would improve air and water quality, protect families' health, and create a more equal system for everyone in Maryland.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1287 so that all Maryland families, especially children can grow up in healthier and safer environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Paulina Molina

# **HB 1287 CHERISH PSC - Support-Phil Webster-UULM-MD**

Uploaded by: Phil Webster

Position: FAV



# Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

## Testimony in Support of HB 1287 CHERISH Our Communities Act

TO: Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee  
FROM: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate for the Climate  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
DATE: March 13, 2026

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **HB 1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**. The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on Unitarian Universalist (UU) Values, including Interdependence (honoring the interdependent web of all existence) and Justice (where all feel welcome and can thrive). Working to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience for climate change is central to our beliefs.

**The CHERISH our Communities Act** has been around for more than ten years, in one form or another. Originally introduced in 2014, it is based on a simple premise: *Enough (pollution) Is Enough*. The bill would require environmental impact assessments utilizing the “Maryland Environmental Justice (EJ) Screening Tool” for new, renewed, and expanded environmental permits to ensure that communities that are designated “Environmental Justice” (EJ), do not continue to disproportionately bear the harms of environmental and public health hazards.

The Maryland EJ Screening tool builds upon the foundation from previous laws. In 2022, Maryland Law officially designated areas hit hardest by environmental and economic challenges, “overburdened” and “underserved” communities. “Justice 40 language” was also included in the Joint Chairmen’s Report (JCR) from the legislative budget committees to request information from Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on recommendations to identify and provide assistance to overburdened communities, legislative & regulatory changes to direct at least 40% of funding from critical programs to community needs.

**The CHERISH Our Communities Act** gives the Public Service Commission the authority to use the “EJ Score” when evaluating new, renewed, and expanded Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN).

We urge a FAVORABLE report on **HB 1287**.

*Phil Webster, PhD*

Lead Advocate for the Climate, UULM-MD

**UULM-MD c/o UU Church of Annapolis 333 Dubois Road Annapolis, MD 21401 410-266-8044,**

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# **Testimony Supporting HB1287.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Casteel

Position: FAV

**Testimony Supporting HB1287**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee Committee**  
**March 11, 2026**



**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of Wicomico County, and a resident concerned about environmental justice, I am writing to express my strong support of HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act applying to CPCNs for polluting energy generation.

This bill applies CHERISH Our Communities Act principles to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, which are the permits needed by new or expanding power plants or other facilities putting energy onto the grid. It is targeted in geography: it applies only to parts of the state that are burdened by disproportionate pollution. It is targeted in scope: it will apply only to polluting energy generation (not wind, solar, or geothermal), meaning that it will apply to very few projects each year and won't strain state resources to administer.

This bill prevents new polluting energy generation from being built if the Public Service Commission determines, through a deliberative public process with public input, that allowing it to be built would contribute to a disproportionate pollution and health burden on the nearby community.

No one should be in favor of forcing environmental justice communities that are already overburdened by pollution to host even more pollution to put more electricity on our regional grid to benefit communities far away - or data center power demands.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Rachel Casteel*

*Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health (SESH)*

**Maryland LCV\_FAV\_HB 1287 CHERISH Act.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rebecca Rehr

Position: FAV



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LEAGUE OF  
CONSERVATION  
VOTERS**

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March 13, 2026

**Support: HB 1287 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity -  
BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV is submitting this testimony to strongly support HB 1287, The CHERISH Our Communities Act. We thank Delegate Johnson for introducing this important bill as well as Delegate Behler for introducing its companion HB 1268, and for their leadership on this issue. The CHERISH Our Communities Act package is a top priority for Maryland LCV, as well as a priority for the environmental community.

Environmental justice is rooted in the principles that all communities deserve a clean and healthy environment, and those most affected have a voice in the decisions shaping their future. These principles are reflected in HB 1287, which builds on years of community-driven efforts to assess the cumulative impacts of pollution. This bill addresses gaps in the Public Service Commission's (PSC) permitting authority to protect the health and well-being of communities.

HB 1287 seeks protections for overburdened and underserved communities, authorizing additional scrutiny for certain permits when they are proposed in these communities, as well as the authority for the agency to use environmental justice and cumulative impacts information to make a decision about a permit.

HB 1287 takes the commonsense step of requiring an applicant to submit a Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) Report for certain CPCNs proposed in at-risk areas, defined in the bill language. The results of the BURDEN Report would factor into the permit decision. At-risk census tracts are among the most polluted and underserved in the state, making it critical that permits in these communities undergo additional screening. This approach ensures that the health and well-being of residents are prioritized and that the state fulfills its commitment to environmental justice.

The first cumulative impacts bill was proposed in Maryland in 2014. Since that time, Maryland has made some progress, including the development of the state's EJ mapping tool, now MDEnviroScreen, and requiring that some environmental justice information be included in certain types of permit applications. But we have fallen behind other states including New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Minnesota in implementing comprehensive and meaningful cumulative impacts laws.

We want to bring your attention to the written testimony from Environmental Justice and Action Promotores of Maryland LCV's Chispa Maryland program in support of this bill. They're joining many other Chispa community members in advocating for the CHERISH Act. Chispa's Promotores are community volunteers who work tirelessly alongside families in their communities to advance environmental justice. They advocate for healthy communities and a clean environment where their families can thrive and their children can reach their full potential.

Maryland LCV strongly urges a favorable report on this important bill, and its companion that addresses permits at MDE. We are supportive of the sponsor package of amendments being presented at the hearing.

**HB1287 CHERISH Act Favorable Kranz 3-13-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rhonda Kranz

Position: FAV

Testimony on: HB1287– Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Submitting: Rhonda Kranz

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 10, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my written testimony in support of HB1287, the CHERISH our Communities Act - BURDEN Analysis. This is an issue of great importance to me. As a Marylander and concerned citizen, I am troubled by the lack of protections against continued siting of polluting facilities near our already overburdened and underserved communities. The State currently looks at each new permit in isolation and does not look at the combined effects of all pollution sources in one neighborhood. There is no protection for local residents who are forced to endure this discriminatory practice.

SB0780 takes an important step in addressing this problem. The bill would require an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk area to include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report describing and including information on environmental and public health burdens. The bill would address the need for the PSC to consider cumulative exposures for neighborhoods already overburdened from pollution when issuing a CPCN.

It is important that this bill addresses environmental justice and health issues. Over the last sixty years a disproportionate number of Maryland's power plants have been cited in communities of color. Pollutants from these plants include mercury and neurotoxins and are especially harmful to children. The communities also suffer from the noise, traffic, and water contamination, and social upheaval that accompany these facilities.

We have seen the impacts of disproportionate pollution in Curtis Bay, South Baltimore, Brandywine, and dozens of other communities in Maryland. We cannot let this continue. HB1287 requires the PSC to consider health risks and cumulative effects on our communities. Environmental justice must be front and center as Maryland continues to develop. For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue a FAVORABLE report for HB1287.

# **Testimony in support of HB1268 - CHERISH Our Commu**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB1268\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

03/13/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON HB#1268- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

**TO:** Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#1268, **Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health - CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

This bill is submitted to create environmental justice for all communities in Maryland. The American Public Health Association defines environmental justice as: <sup>1</sup>

Environmental justice is the idea that all people and communities have the right to live and thrive in safe, healthy environments with equal environmental protection and meaningful involvement in these actions.

The Environmental Law Clinic of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law report *Environmental Justice in Maryland* <sup>2</sup> documents the:

- Environmental Justice Background
- Maryland's Environmental Justice Efforts
- Environmental Justice Issues in Maryland
- Recommendations

We know of countless examples of the lack of environmental justice in South Baltimore (Curtis Bay/Fairfield) and in Brandywine (Prince George's County) among other communities that are specifically affecting minority populations. This bill enforces an analysis of environmental and public health burdens to be included in the application and a determination if approval should be given or withheld by the Department of the Environment based on that reported information.

This bill will center environmental justice in decisions on any application by requiring an application for the issuance or renewal of a covered individual environmental permit for a site or facility located within an at-risk census tract after a certain date to include in the permit application a report describing the environmental and public health burdens in the at-risk census tract; requiring the Department of the Environment to issue a determination as to whether approving a covered individual environmental permit will cause or contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors; etc.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#1268, CHERISH Our Communities Act**

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/environmental-health/environmental-justice#:~:text=Environmental%20justice%20is%20a%20public,%2D%20Spanish%2C%202023%20\(PDF\)](https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/environmental-health/environmental-justice#:~:text=Environmental%20justice%20is%20a%20public,%2D%20Spanish%2C%202023%20(PDF))

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bdlaw.com/content/uploads/2019/04/fulltext.pdf>

# **HB 1287\_Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home\_FAV**

Uploaded by: Robert Simon

Position: FAV



Hearing before the House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
March 13, 2026

**Statement of Support (FAVORABLE)  
of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home for  
HB 1287, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis  
(CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home (MCCH) is a lay-led organization of Catholics from parishes in the three Catholic dioceses in Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. It engages in education about, and advocacy based upon, the teachings of the Catholic Church relating to care for creation and respect for all life. MCCH is a grassroots voice for the understanding of Catholic social teaching held by a wide array of Maryland Catholics. This year, over 700 Maryland Catholics from 34 different Catholic parishes and religious communities across the State have joined together through MCCH to support several key environmental bills under consideration by the General Assembly. MCCH is independent, though, and should be distinguished as an organization from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the public policy positions of the bishops who lead these three dioceses.

Because we are attuned both to the cry of a distressed Earth and the cry of the poor who suffer first and foremost from environmental pollution, including a warming planet, **MCCH would like to express our strong support for House Bill 1287, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act).**

From our faith perspective this is an important bill (as is its companion, HB 1268, also being heard at this hearing).

In his 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*,<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis called for a comprehensive response to protecting God's creation—one that addresses, simultaneously, two related crises: (1) the widespread despoliation of our environment (our air, water, and soils that sustain all life) by human activities; and (2) the disproportionate impact on the poor of environmental and climate collapse.

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<sup>1</sup> The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the parentheses on the next page refer, can be found at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

Pope Leo XIV highlighted the duty of Catholics to act on the second of these crises—the lack of environmental justice—in his message last year for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,<sup>2</sup> stating:

Environmental justice—implicitly proclaimed by the prophets—can no longer be regarded as an abstract concept or a distant goal. It is an urgent need that involves much more than simply protecting the environment. For it is a matter of justice—social, economic and human. For believers it is also a duty born of faith, since the universe reflects the face of Jesus Christ, in whom all things were created and redeemed. In a world where the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters are the first to suffer the devastating effects of climate change, deforestation and pollution, care for creation becomes an expression of our faith and humanity.

House Bill 1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act for the Public Service Commission, addresses both environmental protection and environmental justice in an integrated, but targeted, fashion. It focuses exclusively on Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) being issued by the Maryland Public Service Commission for new or expanded power plants or other facilities that will be placing power on the electric grid. Within this set of CPCNs, it applies only to those facilities that will be creating new pollution—which means that it will not affect solar, wind, geothermal, or other non-polluting facilities. As a practical matter, it will probably only apply to a few facilities each year. And yet, it is important that communities already burdened by disproportionate pollution have a transparent and inclusive process in which they can participate with respect to these facilities. Currently, these communities have no opportunity to provide public comment on the issuance of CPCNs for new, neighboring, polluting power plants. The CHERISH Our Communities Act will ensure public participation in the process and fix this longstanding environmental injustice.

House Bill 1287 will prevent new polluting energy generation from being built if the Public Service Commission determines, through a deliberative public process with public input, that allowing it to be built would contribute to a disproportionate pollution and health burden on the nearby community.

The limited and targeted approach in this bill (as in its companion bill, HB 1268) is an effective remedy for a historical pattern of unfairly siting polluting facilities in minority, economically distressed, or rural communities through decision-making processes that have not been transparent or inclusive.

To our mind, both bills carrying the short title of the “CHERISH Our Communities Act” (i.e., HB 1287 and HB 1268) speak to the essence of how we treat and value one another—as human beings and as members of communities—with the respect and dignity that each deserves. Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si’* that “everything is connected” and “concern for the environment thus needs to be joined in a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society. A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings” (no. 91).

For these reasons we strongly urge your support for this bill. Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on House Bill 1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

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<sup>2</sup> The English text of the “Message of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV for the 10<sup>th</sup> World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation 2025” can be found at: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/creation/documents/20250630-messaggio-giornata-curacreato.html>.

**HB1287\_Roberto Lopez\_FAV\_CHERISH ACT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Roberto Lopez

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Roberto Lopez

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Roberto Lopez, I am 17 years old, and I am an 11th grade student at Fairmont Heights School. I live in the Hyattsville Area, in District 47. I am a part of the Youth Leadership Academy with CHISPA Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1287 - CHERISH Our Communities Act because this legislation is critical to protecting the health and well-being of families like mine and communities across Maryland.

I am grateful for the opportunity to write in support of the CHERISH Our Communities Act. This legislation offers an opportunity to improve quality of life for many people. As a student, I understand how important clean air is. When air quality is poor and pollution is high, people are more likely to get sick and develop serious health problems.

Communities that are already overburdened by pollution should not continue to face additional harm from polluting industries. Stronger permitting standards can help protect these neighborhoods by ensuring pollution is carefully reviewed and by preventing further damage to public health. These protections are especially important for children, families, and pregnant individuals who are more vulnerable to environmental harm.

Now is the time to act. During this legislative session, you have the opportunity to make a real difference by supporting policies that create healthier living conditions for Maryland residents.

I respectfully urge you to support HB1287 so that all Maryland families, especially children, can grow up in safer and healthier environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberto Lopez

# **HB Cherrish Sliviak Ruth.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ruth Sliviak

Position: FAV

Ruth Sliviak

[Ruth@ics-insurance.com](mailto:Ruth@ics-insurance.com)

**House Bills 1287 and 1268– SUPPORT**

**Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (HB 1287)**

**And Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and  
Renewal, and Public Participation (Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration  
for Improving Shared Health (HB 1268)**

**(CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ruth Sliviak and I have been a resident of Anne Arundel for over 12 years. We built our dream home on Rock Creek. Our home property backs up to Weinberg Park. We enjoy seeing all the wildlife and beautiful water views but not the black soot that seems to stick to all outdoor surfaces or the air quality at times because of what is being expelled into the air from the various industrial areas that are within a few miles of our home via air.

I have major concerns about all of the industrial polluters that are currently operating in our area and the legacy pollution that has contaminated our waterways, the air that we breathe and the ground that we build and live on. The exterior of our home, patio's, decks and windows develop a black substance that is very difficult to remove and having resided in the Maryland area our entire life we have never seen this anywhere else. The stacks at Brandon Shores emit black smoke and this past summer there was a sticky black residue with particles that adhered to surfaces all over the area. We have never received final communication about what that substance might have been let alone the dangers of breathing it. We have Grace Chemical, Glidden Paint, Brandon Shores Coal burning Generating Station and Medical Wastes incinerators just to name a few of the active polluters in the area. The legacy chemicals that have been illegally dumped in our water ways and land continue to pollute our area. We can't keep on piling on the pollutants and endangering our health as well as the environment. There needs to be regulatory controls on the amounts and kinds of pollution that can be generated in overburdened areas of our state.

We need to have the very best available technology to make sure the current polluters are protecting us to the best of their ability and not just in the best interest of the bottom line.

When we built our home there were all sorts of requirements with regard to our septic system, it had to be monitored and the BAT (Best available Technology) which of course came at a cost that we were “happy” to pay to protect our ground and water ways. It certainly seems fair that the large profitable organizations should have the same strict requirements let alone limit more being put into our area.

I support this bill so that not only my health and safety are protected but the health and safety of my children, grandchildren and generations to follow. We need to make sure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and recreate. We invested in our home and the thought of our property value being negatively impacted because of the polluters is infuriating.

Senate Bills SB 0780 and SB 0781 proposed in this legislative session will create the necessary regulatory infrastructure to implement a measured and cost-effective approach to correcting the burden of cumulative pollution in Maryland’s most overburdened communities and it will give overburdened communities a voice in the process.

**I strongly support SB 0780 and SB 0781.**

Sincerely,

Ruth Sliviak

Rock Creek

Pasadena, MD 21122

Ruth@ics-insurance.com

**HB1287\_Sandra Martinez\_FAV\_CHERISH.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sandra Martinez

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

**Testimony on:** HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

**Submitting:** Sandra Martinez

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sandra Martinez. I am a mother of four, and one of my children lives with respiratory issues and asthma. For the past two years, my family and I have lived in Baltimore City's District 46, where we have experienced firsthand the harmful effects of pollution in our community.

Every day, industrial activity and heavy transportation bring dust and pollution into our neighborhoods. We are forced to breathe air that negatively impacts our health and see pollution settle on our homes, cars, and streets. My daughter, who has special needs and asthma, struggles even more because of poor air quality. No parent should have to watch their child suffer simply because of where they live.

Communities like mine have been overlooked for far too long when it comes to environmental protections. Families in frontline neighborhoods continue to carry a heavier burden of pollution and health impacts, yet our voices are often not included in decisions that affect our lives. The CHERISH Our Communities Act is an important step toward ensuring that cumulative pollution impacts are considered and that communities like mine receive the protection and attention we deserve.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of HB1287 so that families like mine can live in healthier neighborhoods where our children can breathe clean air and thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Martinez

**CHERISH\_Maryland\_2026 HB1287\_CPCN.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Bucic

Position: FAV

## ALLIANCE OF NURSES FOR HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

*BRINGING SCIENCE AND PASSION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT*

March 6, 2026

House Committee on Environment and Transportation

**Re: Letter of Support for CHERISH our Communities Act: from Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health (HB1287)**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in strong support of HB1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act applying to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCNs) for polluting energy generation.

The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments (ANHE) is the leading global nursing organization focused on the intersection of human health and planetary health. With over 10,000 members nationwide and over 550 nurse members in Maryland, ANHE supports a cumulative impact analysis and approach. Using a cumulative impacts framework<sup>1</sup> makes regulating over 80,000 chemicals possible, and can potentially reduce disparities<sup>2</sup> in environmental exposure which is especially important for Black, Brown, and low-income communities who are exposed to higher levels of pollution.

As nurses and healthcare providers, we know that nobody is exposed to one pollutant at a time. Peoples' actual lived experience includes exposure to multiple pollutants, from multiple sources, interacting with other stressors

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<sup>1</sup> Ellickson, K. (February 13, 2023). *When it comes to the cumulative impacts of pollution, the science is in.* Union of Concerned Scientists. <https://blog.ucsusa.org/kellickson/when-it-comes-to-the-cumulative-impacts-of-pollution-the-science-is-in/>

<sup>2</sup> National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC). (October 4, 2024). *Reducing cumulative and disproportionate impacts and burdens in environmental justice communities.* <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/nejac-recommendations-for-reducing-cumulative-and-disproportionate-impacts-and-burdens-in-environmental-justice-communities.pdf>



## ALLIANCE OF NURSES FOR HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

*BRINGING SCIENCE AND PASSION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT*

throughout one's life. Environmental exposures continue to occur at every level of human development and can have a single effect or cumulative effects across the lifespan.

ANHE applauds steps taken in recent years at the federal level on cumulative impacts.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> However, Maryland can take further action. States like New Jersey<sup>7</sup> and Massachusetts,<sup>8</sup> and local governments have been leading the way<sup>9</sup> in cumulative impacts policies and method developments.

There is a history of cumulative impacts implementation or written protocols for implementation, including the State of New Jersey's rule,<sup>10</sup> the Massachusetts rule,<sup>11</sup> and the Minnesota law's process document.<sup>12</sup> This is certainly not an exhaustive list, and demonstrates a large body of work that deserves continued attention and growth, and implementation in overburdened communities.

Maryland lags behind other states that have passed laws requiring assessment of the cumulative impacts of multiple pollutants on the same community. As

<sup>3</sup> Biden, Joseph R., (January 20, 2021). *Executive Order 13985, Advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities throughout the federal government.* <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-01-25/pdf/2021-01753.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. EPA. (April 2022). *Executive Order 13985 Equity Action Plan.*

[https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/epa\\_equityactionplan\\_april2022\\_508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-04/epa_equityactionplan_april2022_508.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> U.S. EPA, (February 14, 2024). *Equity Action Plan.* <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/epa-2023-equity-action-plan.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. EPA. (2022). *Cumulative impacts research: Recommendations for EPA's Office of Research and Development.*

[https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/sj\\_public\\_record\\_report.cfm?dirEntryId=357832&Lab=ORD&simplesearch=0&showcriteria=2&sortBy=pubDate&se\\_archall=357832&fimsType=&datebeginpublishedpresented=05/17/2021](https://cfpub.epa.gov/si/sj_public_record_report.cfm?dirEntryId=357832&Lab=ORD&simplesearch=0&showcriteria=2&sortBy=pubDate&se_archall=357832&fimsType=&datebeginpublishedpresented=05/17/2021)

<sup>7</sup> New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) N.J.A.C. 7:1C *Environmental justice.*

[https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/rules/rules/njac7\\_1c.pdf](https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/rules/rules/njac7_1c.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> MassDEP. (March 29, 2024). *Cumulative impact analysis in air quality permitting.*

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/cumulative-impact-analysis-in-air-quality-permitting#regulations->

<sup>9</sup> Tishman Center. (Sept 28, 2022). *Understanding the evolution of 'cumulative impacts' definitions and policies in the U.S.*

<https://www.tishmancenter.org/blog/new-research-understanding-the-evolution-of-cumulative-impacts-definitions-and-policies-in-the-us>

<sup>10</sup> See citation 8 [N.J. A.C.]

<sup>11</sup> See citation 9 [MassDEP]

<sup>12</sup> Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. *Air permitting in south Minneapolis*

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/air-permitting-in-south-minneapolis>





## ALLIANCE OF NURSES FOR HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

*BRINGING SCIENCE AND PASSION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT*

nurses, we are led by our professional obligations<sup>13</sup> which make addressing health, environment and safety a professional focus. In Maryland, many communities face a barrage of pollution sources. In South Baltimore alone, residents are surrounded by nearly 100 EPA-regulated polluting facilities, including:

- A massive trash incinerator, the nation's largest medical waste incinerator, and multiple landfills.
- A wastewater treatment plant and an animal rendering plant.
- An open-air coal terminal, a coal ash landfill, and oil and gas tanks.
- Asphalt production plants, chemical manufacturing, and heavy truck routes surround the community's rec center.

Pollution from all of these facilities combine with each other and compound with other inequalities to produce more and worse health impacts. In South Baltimore, failure to act has even led to the involuntary displacement of entire communities.

ANHE supports the work of local advocacy groups such as the South Baltimore Community Land Trust and their efforts to create healthier environments. Communities, which have been long overburdened with pollution and inadequate regulatory practices, need to have their concerns addressed and problems solved.

HB1287 is targeted in geography - it will apply to parts of the state that are burdened by disproportionate pollution and it is targeted in scope meaning it will apply only to polluting energy generation (not wind, solar, or geothermal).

<sup>13</sup> American Nurses Association. (2020). *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice (4th ed.)*. Standard 18: Environmental Health. ANA.





Alliance of Nurses for  
Healthy Environments

## **ALLIANCE OF NURSES FOR HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS**

***BRINGING SCIENCE AND PASSION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT***

Because of this limited scope, the bill will apply to very few projects each year and will not strain state resources to administer.

HB1287 prevents new polluting energy generation from being built if the Public Service Commission determines, through a deliberative public process with public input, that allowing it to be built would contribute to a disproportionate pollution and health burden on the nearby community. This transparent process allowing for community input is an integral part of environmental justice for communities.

No one should be in favor of forcing environmental justice communities that are already overburdened by pollution to host even more pollution to put more electricity on our regional grid to benefit communities far away - or data center power demands. We urge you to support HB1287.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Huffling". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN**

**Executive Director**

**Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments**



240.753.3729



P.O. Box 25 Mount Rainier,  
MD 20712



info@envirn.org

# **HB1287\_CHERISH\_FAV\_ClimateCC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sonia Demiray

Position: FAV



**HB 1287 - SUPPORT**

Sonia Demiray  
Climate Communications Coalition  
[sonia@demirayink.com](mailto:sonia@demirayink.com)  
202-744-2948

**HB 1287**

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

Environment and Transportation

March 10, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

The Climate Communications Coalition is a non-profit Maryland-based grassroots climate and environmental justice organization, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, and of the Maryland Climate Justice Wing, among others. The Climate Communications Coalition strongly supports HB 1287.

The CHERISH Act gives communities that have been overburdened by pollution a much-needed voice and safeguard against further injustice. Impacts from pollution cause cancer, respiratory and heart diseases, shorten lifespans, and can dramatically reduce quality of life.

The CHERISH Act will provide communities with an opportunity to comment when a new source of pollution applies to be located in their midst, and it empowers the Public Service Commission (PSC) to protect environmental justice communities based on specific geographic locations. The CHERISH principles will be applied to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, which are the permits needed by new or expanding power plants or other facilities putting energy onto the grid. Existing power plants that pollute must maintain an operating air pollution permit issued by MDE, also subject to this bill.

The CHERISH Act protects Maryland communities and the environment by incorporating cumulative impacts into the MDE and Public Service Commission permitting processes – a guardrail that has successfully been implemented in other states including New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York.

The Climate Communications Coalition respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1287.

###

# **HB1287\_CHERISH\_FAV\_ClimateCC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sonia Demiray

Position: FAV



**HB 1287 - SUPPORT**

Sonia Demiray  
Climate Communications Coalition  
[sonia@demirayink.com](mailto:sonia@demirayink.com)  
202-744-2948

**HB 1287**

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

Environment and Transportation

March 13, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

The Climate Communications Coalition is a non-profit Maryland-based grassroots climate and environmental justice organization, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, and of the Maryland Climate Justice Wing, among others. The Climate Communications Coalition strongly supports HB 1287.

The CHERISH Act gives communities that have been overburdened by pollution a much-needed voice and safeguard against further injustice. Impacts from pollution cause cancer, respiratory and heart diseases, shorten lifespans, and can dramatically reduce quality of life.

The CHERISH Act will provide communities with an opportunity to comment when a new source of pollution applies to be located in their midst, and it empowers the Public Service Commission (PSC) to protect environmental justice communities based on specific geographic locations. The CHERISH principles will be applied to Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, which are the permits needed by new or expanding power plants or other facilities putting energy onto the grid. Existing power plants that pollute must maintain an operating air pollution permit issued by MDE, also subject to this bill.

The CHERISH Act protects Maryland communities and the environment by incorporating cumulative impacts into the MDE and Public Service Commission permitting processes – a guardrail that has successfully been implemented in other states including New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York.

The Climate Communications Coalition respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1287 but rejects MACO's amendments.

###

**Bergman\_HB1268\_HB1287\_Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Steven Bergman

Position: FAV

House Bills 1268 and 1287 – SUPPORT

Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - Burden Analysis (HB 1268)

and

Environmental Permits - Requirements for Burden Analysis, Issuance and Renewal, and Public Participation

(Cumulative Harms for Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health (CHERISH Our Communities Act))

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steven B. Bergman, and I live on the Delmarva Peninsula on Maryland's Eastern Shore. I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1268 and HB 1287, the CHERISH Our Communities Act.

Across Maryland, many communities continue to live with the accumulated effects of decades of industrial activity and environmental neglect. Areas such as northern Anne Arundel County and South Baltimore have experienced a long legacy of pollution sources including power generation facilities, industrial operations, waste incineration, contaminated dredge materials, and other industrial byproducts. While individual permits may comply with current regulations, the combined and cumulative effects of multiple pollution sources in the same geographic areas are often overlooked.

This cumulative burden has real consequences. Communities exposed to multiple pollutants face higher risks of respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, environmental degradation, and economic hardship. These impacts ripple through families, local businesses, healthcare systems, and property values, creating a cycle that disproportionately affects already vulnerable communities.

The CHERISH legislation represents a thoughtful and measured step toward addressing this problem. By requiring burden analysis and stronger public participation in environmental permitting, these bills modernize Maryland's regulatory framework and help ensure that future permitting decisions consider the total environmental load already borne by nearby residents. Just as importantly, the legislation gives communities that are directly affected by these decisions a meaningful voice in the process.

Maryland has long been a leader in environmental stewardship. Passing HB 1268 and HB 1287 would reaffirm that commitment by ensuring that environmental policy reflects not only technical compliance, but also fairness, public health, and long-term sustainability.

House Bills HB 1268 and HB 1287 proposed in this legislative session will create the necessary regulatory infrastructure to implement a measured and cost-effective approach to correcting the burden of cumulative pollution in Maryland's most overburdened communities and will give those communities a voice in the process.

For these reasons, I strongly support HB 1268 and HB 1287 without additional amendments.

Sincerely,

Steven B. Bergman

Salisbury, MD 21804

otisbergman01@gmail.com

# **Written Testimony in Favor of HB1287 - Certificate**

Uploaded by: Tom Taylor

Position: FAV

## **Written Testimony in Favor of HB1287 - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

March 11, 2026

To: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Economic and Transportation Committee

I am submitting testimony in favor of HB1287, one of two bills that comprise the CHERISH Our Communities Act. The second and complementary bill is HB1268.

Together, these two bills protect vulnerable communities in Maryland from health-harming pollution. People living in Maryland's most polluted communities deserve state protections that prioritize human health. These two bills will extend equity and equal attention to good health to all state residents. In a time of rising healthcare costs, the disease-preventing impact of these measures will provide significant economic and fiscal benefits for Maryland.

As a community advocate who has worked directly with minority and vulnerable communities, I know that polluting facilities have disproportionately impacted the health of residents of these communities. This is an opportunity for policies that address health disparities to be put in place. These two bills combined will help lead to better health for these communities, and will lead to greater attention in general to health-harming practices throughout all of Maryland.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act was developed by frontline communities in Maryland based on years of navigating Maryland's permitting system and working to protect their communities from pollution. It takes lessons learned from successful bills passed in New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York. In communities in the state disproportionately burdened by pollution, it ensures that residents have a voice in the permitting process, state agencies gain the information and analysis they need to make informed permitting decisions, and communities are protected from disproportionate levels of pollution that harm their health. This targeted and tailored approach will protect communities from polluting development while allowing positive community development to thrive.

HB1287 will apply these principles to permits issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC), while the complementary HB1268 will do the same for permits issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). Passage of both bills will help every community in Maryland be a healthy place to live.

Please give a favorable report on HB1287.

Sincerely,  
Tom Taylor  
11-G Laurel Hill Road  
Greenbelt, MD 20770  
301-513-9524

**HB 1287- LBCMD 2026 Priority Support Letter (1).pd**

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarín

Position: FAV



# LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3185 • 800-492-7122 Ext. 3185 • Black.Caucus@house.state.md.us

March 10, 2026

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Delegate Greg Wims, District 39  
Delegate Caylin Young, District 45

Chair Marc Korman

Environment and Transportation Committee

250 Taylor House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

**The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 1287- Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act).** The bill requires companies that want to build certain power plants in vulnerable areas to submit a special report, which is a BURDEN report that identifies the current environmental and public health problems in that community. The Public Service Commission must review this information and decide whether approving the power plant would make pollution or health problems worse. If the project causes any additional harmful environmental impacts, it must deny the application in certain situations. The Senate bill protects communities that are experiencing environmental and health challenges from taking on additional harm from new power plants. **This bill is a 2026 legislative priority for the Black Caucus.**

Black and brown industrial communities have carried the burden of the fossil fuel energy system and are easily targeted for polluting facilities such as industrial sites, mining operations, and hazardous waste landfills. The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland believes that HB1287 incorporates consideration of cumulative impacts into the Maryland process of issuing permits to pollute based on laws that have been passed in New Jersey, Minnesota, and New York.

HB1287 will prevent new polluting facilities from being built in environmental justice communities and ensure public participation in the process, address this longstanding environmental injustice and reduce pollution from existing facilities when their permits are being renewed.

**For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports House Bill 1287.**

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

# **HB1287 CPSR Cherish Act Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ursula Gately

Position: FAV



**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**Testimony on: HB1287 – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: March 3, 2026**

*Submitted on behalf of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR). CPSR is a statewide evidence-based organization of over 900 physicians and other health professionals and supporters that addresses existential public health threats: nuclear weapons, the climate crisis, and the issues of pollution and toxic effects on health, as seen through the intersectional lens of environmental, racial, and social justice.*

**CPSR strongly supports the CHERISH Act (HB1287).** As written, this legislation would authorize the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and Public Service Commission of Maryland (PSC) to incorporate a community’s environmental justice score and cumulative pollution burden into decisions regarding environmental permits. At present, MDE and PSC evaluate permit applications largely in isolation, without formal authority to consider cumulative impacts or environmental justice scoring in their final determinations. The CHERISH Act would correct this structural gap.

Under HB1287, if a proposed project would increase pollution in an already overburdened community, MDE and PSC would be required to impose meaningful conditions or secure a community benefits agreement before issuing a permit. Other states, including New York<sup>1</sup> and New Jersey<sup>2</sup>, have enacted similar cumulative impact legislation, recognizing that environmental burdens are not evenly distributed.

As medical trainees and physicians caring for patients across Baltimore City, we see firsthand the consequences of cumulative pollution exposure. Communities located near facilities such as the WIN Waste incinerator, the Curtis Bay medical waste incinerator, and the CSX coal export terminal face disproportionate exposure to pollutants, including particulate matter (PM2.5) and nitrogen oxides (NOx). These pollutants are strongly associated with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, cancer risk, and premature mortality.

A 2025 analysis of Baltimore incinerators estimated that in 2024 alone, the combined health damages attributable to the WIN Waste and Curtis Bay medical waste incinerators totaled approximately \$97 million.<sup>3</sup> These facilities are located in majority-Black and low-income neighborhoods that already experience structural barriers to healthcare access.

Asthma illustrates the cumulative toll. According to The Abell Foundation, approximately 20% of children in Baltimore City have asthma- more than double the national prevalence of 9%.<sup>5</sup> Baltimore City's asthma hospitalization rate is nearly three times the national average and more than twice the Maryland average.<sup>6</sup> Children hospitalized or treated in the emergency department for asthma are disproportionately Black and from lower-income households.<sup>5</sup>

Without a cumulative impact review, additional pollution sources risk compounding these disparities. Curtis Bay is one community that showcases why cumulative burden analysis is necessary. This community is surrounded by numerous industrial facilities, including an open-air coal export terminal, medical and municipal waste incinerators, a wastewater treatment plant, truck corridors, and other infrastructure. A detailed environmental justice analysis found that Curtis Bay ranks in the 99th percentile nationally for proximity to facilities with elevated risk of explosions, leaks, or hazardous material releases.<sup>4</sup>

In 2021, a coal dust explosion occurred at the CSX terminal, leaving coal residue on nearby homes and schools.<sup>7</sup> In 2017, a major residential fire displaced nearly two dozen residents.<sup>8</sup> The area also receives some of the lowest water quality scores in the Baltimore region, largely due to chronic sewage overflows.<sup>9</sup>

These environmental and infrastructural stressors do not occur in isolation. They layer upon one another, increasing respiratory risk, cardiovascular disease burden, and overall community vulnerability. The CHERISH Act would provide MDE with the authority to account for these existing cumulative risks before approving new or renewed permits.

The CHERISH Act advances fairness, transparency, and public health. It strengthens Maryland's permitting process by ensuring that cumulative harms are evaluated before additional burdens are imposed on already vulnerable communities. It does not halt economic development. Rather, it ensures that development proceeds responsibly, with meaningful community participation and appropriate safeguards.

Maryland has the opportunity to lead by prioritizing health equity in environmental decision-making. CPSR respectfully urges a favorable report on HB1287.

Sincerely,  
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility  
P.O. Box 10445  
Baltimore, Maryland 21209-0445  
410-615-0717

Ursula Gately, MS2  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine  
ugately1@jhmi.edu

## References

1. New York State Senate. S8830 (2021–2022): Cumulative Impacts Law.  
<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S8830>
2. New Jersey Senate. S232 (2020): Environmental Justice Law.  
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**HB1287\_Veronica Gasca\_Fav\_Cherish act.pdf**

Uploaded by: Veronica Gasca

Position: FAV

March 06, 2026

Testimony on: HB1287 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

Submitting: Veronica Gasca

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 10, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Veronica Gasca, and I have been a proud resident of Baltimore City's District 6 for the past nine years. I am a mother of two children, and while I am grateful that my children do not currently suffer from asthma or respiratory illness, this issue is deeply personal to me.

My nephew suffers from asthma, and I have witnessed firsthand the fear, stress, and pain that asthma attacks cause—not only for him, but for my sister as a mother. Watching a child struggle to breathe is something no family should have to experience. Unfortunately, in many Baltimore neighborhoods, especially communities like ours, asthma and other respiratory illnesses are far too common due to long-standing exposure to poor air quality and pollution.

For too long, our communities have carried the burden of cumulative environmental impacts. We live near busy highways, industrial sites, and other sources of pollution that affect the air we breathe every day. Families in our neighborhoods should not have to choose between staying in their homes and protecting their health. Clean air is not a luxury—it is a basic right.

This issue is even more urgent for me because my sister is currently pregnant. As we prepare to welcome a new baby into our family, I worry about the health risks that pollution poses to pregnant women and newborns. Every child deserves to be born into a healthy environment, free from preventable respiratory illnesses and long-term health problems.

The CHERISH Our Communities Act will help address the cumulative impacts that have harmed neighborhoods like mine for decades. It will ensure that the state takes into account the total environmental and health burdens communities face before allowing new pollution sources. This is a common-sense, preventative approach that prioritizes health, equity, and fairness.

I respectfully urge you to give HB1287 a favorable report. Our families deserve clean air, healthy pregnancies, and a future where our children can grow up without fear of preventable illness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Veronica Gasca

**HB1287\_IndivisibleHoCo\_FAV\_Smith.pdf**

Uploaded by: Virginia Smith

Position: FAV



## HB1287

### Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Testimony before House Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing March 13, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Korman and Co-Chair Guyton, and members of the committee, my name is Virginia Smith, and I represent the 1700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of HB1287, which would require an applicant for a certificate of public convenience and necessity for certain generating stations located within a certain at-risk area to include with the application a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (BURDEN) report. We thank Delegate Johnson for introducing this bill.

As a young child, I had many asthma attacks that sent me to the hospital, so I know how terrifying it can feel to think you may pass out because you cannot take one more breath. While my asthma was hereditary, it breaks my heart to know that there are children and adults in communities throughout Maryland who have an increased risk of many diseases, like asthma and cancer, simply because they live in an area where facilities are continually opened and adding to pollution production because the State does not currently assess the overall amount of pollution that a community will have when reviewing permits. In fact, in South Baltimore alone, four pollutants from two waste incinerators cause \$97 million worth of health damages every year.

HB1287, in conjunction with HB1268, will begin to address this problem, by requiring any applicant for a new certificate of public convenience and necessity for a generating station within at risk areas to submit a BURDEN report describing the public health and environmental burdens for that area, including any new or increased pollutants that will be added to the environment from the current applicant. It also defines when the DOE will need to deny these permits if it will contribute or cause adverse stressors or indicators in the at-risk area.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

**We respectfully urge a favorable report.**

Virginia Smith  
Columbia 21044  
District 12A

# **HB1287 CHERISH Favorable Written 2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Walter Tucker

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF**

**CHERISH Act**

**FAVORABLE**

**TO:** Delegate Marc Korman, Chair; Delegate Michele Guyton, Vice Chair and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Rev. Chip Tucker, member of the Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN)

**DATE:** March 13, 2026

The Episcopal Church affirms that no community, especially communities living in poverty, should bear the heaviest burden of environmental pollution or degradation. For too long, certain Maryland neighborhoods—often low-income communities and communities of color—have carried a disproportionate share of pollution, illness, and environmental risk. These are places where asthma rates are higher, where hazardous facilities cluster, and where families live with the cumulative weight of stressors that would never be tolerated elsewhere. HB 1287 finally acknowledges that reality and responds with tools equal to the challenge.

This bill does something both simple and transformative: it requires the Department of the Environment to look at the *whole picture* when evaluating permits in at-risk census tracts. Not just one element - but the cumulative burden borne by real people. It ensures that new or expanded pollution cannot be approved if it worsens already inequitable conditions unless there is truly compelling public interest. And it strengthens public participation so that residents most affected have a meaningful voice in decisions that shape their health.

As people of faith, we believe this bill reflects our shared moral responsibility. It aligns with the conviction that every Marylander deserves clean air, safe water, and a healthy environment, regardless of ZIP code.

*The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN) is a ministry of The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, The Episcopal Diocese of Washington, and The Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA*



HB 1287 does not halt economic activity. It simply ensures that growth does not come at the expense of those who have already borne more than their share. It brings transparency, accountability, and fairness to a permitting system that has too often overlooked cumulative harm.

For the sake of public health, environmental justice, and the dignity of every community in our state, **the Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN) requests a FAVORABLE report.**

# **13MAR26\_HB1268\_BrandywineHistory.pdf**

Uploaded by: Karyn Sonu or Kamita Gray

Position: FWA

# OUR HEALTH IS NOT A PROP

## RESIDUALS

### BY-PRODUCTS AND EFFECTS ON HUMAN HEALTH

CHERISH Act cannot be environmental justice in branding and business-as-usual in operation. As the NAACP and Southern Environmental Law Center’s “Plants to Pollution” framing makes clear, Black communities have long borne a legacy pattern in which pollution is layered onto histories of racial exclusion and disinvestment rather than treated as isolated incidents. The health literature has likewise recognized that African American fence-line communities face disproportionate risks from cumulative exposure, including respiratory harm, asthma burden, toxic emissions, traffic impacts, and other overlapping health effects<sup>1</sup>. In Brandywine, that legacy is not abstract. It reflects decades of state-permitted cumulative burden—coal ash, aggregate mining, material processing, concrete batching, truck traffic, and continuing development pressure—while the people living with the health consequences are too often invoked in narrative but not fully centered in governance.



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<sup>1</sup> See NAACP, *Fumes Across the Fence-Line: The Health Impacts of Air Pollution from Oil & Gas Facilities on African American Communities* (documenting disproportionate air-pollution and health burdens in African American fence-line communities), Brandywine\_HIAPresentation(WEB)

; see also Sacoby M. Wilson, *An Ecologic Framework to Study and Address Environmental Justice and Community Health Issues*, *Environmental Justice* (2009) (describing how segregation, zoning, planning, and development create cumulative community health burdens and environmental injustice), Wilson 2009\_EJframework

; Sacoby M. Wilson, *Environmental Justice Movement: A Review of History, Research, and Public Health Issues* (2010) (tracing the relationship between environmental justice, public health, discriminatory siting, and community self-determination), Dr. Wilson EJ History (Brandywine, MD)

. See generally Southern Environmental Law Center, *Plants to Pollution: Black Communities, Legacy Pollution, and the Path Forward*.

# CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Brandywine is not a hypothetical environmental justice community, and our burden is not new. For more than a decade, our community has lived with the cumulative effects of industrial activity permitted and overseen through State processes, including coal ash management, aggregate mining, material processing, concrete batching, and the truck traffic, dust, runoff, and land disturbance that accompany those uses. MDE's own records acknowledge public-health and biological concerns, groundwater and surface-water exceedances, leachate management, and a landscape shaped by historical sand and gravel mining and industrial activity.

CHERISH Act cannot be environmental justice in branding and business-as-usual in operation. The NAACP's environmental justice work and the broader "Plants to Pollution" framework make clear that Black communities are not facing one-off pollution events; they are living under a legacy system in which industrial burden, toxic exposure, and health harm are repeatedly concentrated in the same places. African American fence-line communities face disproportionate risks from polluted air, asthma triggers, toxic emissions, truck traffic, and other cumulative harms that compound over time. In Brandywine, that is exactly what decades of permitting have produced. So this bill cannot claim environmental justice while preserving a framework that can still undercount, downgrade, or delay recognition of the very health burden Black communities have been carrying for generations.

Coal combustion by-products can contain toxic constituents that, when released as dust or leachate, increase the risk of respiratory harm and other serious health impacts—especially for children, seniors, and people with existing conditions. In coal ash-burdened communities like ours, the issue isn't theoretical: it's long-term exposure, cumulative risk, and preventable harm that demands enforceable safeguards.

That is the context in which Brandywine filed its 2016 Title VI complaint<sup>2</sup>, and that is the context in which this Committee must evaluate the CHERISH Act. Our concern is not with the bill's title or stated purpose. Our concern is whether the bill, as drafted, will actually protect communities like ours, or whether it will create a classification-based framework that can still miss, minimize, or delay recognition of the real burden on the ground. If the trigger for protection depends too heavily on percentile scoring, delayed updates, or administrative recalibration, then a community can continue living with worsening exposure while the model says otherwise. That is not durable environmental justice. That is a structural flaw. And this is why the governance issue matters. In October 2025, Ramón Palencia-Calvo of CHISPA Maryland, within the Maryland League of Conservation Voters structure, affirmatively sought a meeting with BTB in advance of renewed 2026 environmental justice discussions. But when BTB formally placed the real issue on the record—through its November 5 correspondence to Kim Coble—that the question was not testimony, but representation, authority, and compliance with the 2019 Informal Resolution Agreement requiring direct engagement and decision-making with affected residents, Maryland LCV still did not answer who controlled the CHERISH table, who decided who was included or excluded, who authorized the bill to be presented as "community-led," or how directly impacted communities would hold actual decision-making authority going forward. Instead, BTB documented for the record that Maryland LCV had declined to clarify where community authority existed within the framework required under the IRA. After that governance issue was squarely raised, the planned discussion was later cancelled and pushed away from informal engagement.

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<sup>2</sup> See *Complaint Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (May 11, 2016), submitted on behalf of the Brandywine TB Southern Region Neighborhood Coalition, alleging that PSC, MDE, and MDNR actions disproportionately burdened Brandywine's predominantly Black community through cumulative industrial siting, traffic, air pollution, and related impacts, and specifically requesting air-quality monitoring, health assessment, community needs assessment, and traffic assessment, [Final Complaint&Exhibits\\_05-11-...](#)

The complaint also describes Brandywine as a 72.2% Black community with multiple nearby fossil-fuel plants, coal ash disposal, sand and gravel mines, contaminated-soil processing, severe traffic congestion, and poor air quality

That sequence matters. It shows the problem in plain view: Brandywine is welcome when our history can be cited, when our suffering can be referenced, and when Black frontline credibility is useful. But when we insist on actual decision-making power, actual accountability, and actual compliance with the community-engagement obligations rooted in our Title VI record, the door closes.

Let's be honest about what keeps happening in these rooms. CHISPA Maryland and Maryland LCV are repeatedly positioned as central voices in environmental justice conversations, while Black legacy pollution communities like Brandywine are still treated as optional, secondary, or inconvenient when we speak for ourselves. The public narrative cycles through places like Chalk Point and Curtis Bay, but it still does not fully confront the longer arc of Black state-permitted cumulative burden—the reality described by others as the path from plantations to pollution. In Brandywine, that burden is not abstract. It is coal ash. It is mining. It is wash plants. It is concrete batching. It is truck traffic. It is groundwater concern. It is air exposure. It is development pressure layered on top of legacy industrial harm<sup>3</sup>. And yes—when institutions want to invoke Brandywine, they know exactly where to find us.

But our health is not a prop, and our community is not a talking point. Our health has been played with for over a decade. So if CHERISH is going to move, it cannot just be another bill someone wants under their belt for show. It cannot be environmental justice in branding and business-as-usual in operation. If this bill passes without substantial amendments, the State risks repeating the same pattern: using frontline Black communities for narrative legitimacy while preserving a permitting framework that can still undercount, downgrade, or disregard our actual cumulative health burden. That is why these amendments are not cosmetic. They are necessary. They are the difference between a bill that performs environmental justice and a bill that delivers it.

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## HERE WHY GOVERNANCE MATTERS:

And this is why the governance issue matters. In October 2025, Ramón Palencia-Calvo of CHISPA Maryland affirmatively confirmed a meeting with BTB in advance of renewed 2026 environmental justice discussions. BTB then put the real issue on the record in its November 5 correspondence to Kim Coble: not a request for testimony, but a demand for clarity on representation, authority, and the 2019 Informal Resolution Agreement's requirement of direct engagement and decision-making with affected residents. Maryland LCV did not answer who controlled the CHERISH table, who decided inclusion and exclusion, who authorized the bill to be presented as “community-led,” or how directly impacted communities would exercise actual decision-making authority. BTB documented that failure in its compliance record. After that governance issue was squarely raised, the planned discussion was later cancelled. That sequence is not incidental. It reflects the deeper problem this packet addresses: directly impacted Black communities are cited in narrative, but not consistently centered in governance.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Rapid Health Impact Assessment: The Potential Health Impacts of Incinerators and Power Plant Byproducts on Communities in Brandywine, MD* (2015) (identifying Brandywine as an overburdened community with heavy traffic, poor air quality concerns, medically vulnerable populations, and cumulative exposure from power plants, landfill, and incinerator-related activity), HIABrandywine; see also *Rapid Health Impact Assessment* presentation materials, Final Complaint&Exhibits\_05-11-...

; *Revised Brandywine Corrective Measures Plan – March 2025* (acknowledging public-health and biological concerns, groundwater exceedances, surface-water exceedances, leachate management, and a site setting shaped by historical sand and gravel mining and industrial use),

# BRANDYWINE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE RECORD

## Reference Timeline Supporting Historical Relevance

### OVERVIEW

#### COMMUNITY: BRANDYWINE, MD

Brandywine, Maryland has experienced decades of cumulative industrial burden including fossil fuel generation, coal combustion residual storage, aggregate mining operations, and concrete batching facilities permitted by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The community's environmental justice record provides context for the guardrail amendments proposed for the CHERISH Act. Supporting materials are being transmitted with this packet for legislative reference<sup>4</sup>.

### KEY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MILESTONES

#### EARLY 2000S – PRESENT

Expansion of industrial activity in the Brandywine region, including aggregate mining operations and related processing facilities. Community residents have documented concerns regarding dust exposure, truck traffic, groundwater impacts, and cumulative industrial burden.

#### 2010S – COAL COMBUSTION RESIDUAL CONCERNS

Coal ash storage facilities located within the Chesapeake Bay watershed raise environmental and groundwater concerns affecting communities including Brandywine.

#### REFERENCE ARTICLE

“Ticking Time Bombs: Nearly 100 Coal Ash Dumps Pepper the Chesapeake Bay Watershed”

The BayNet @ <https://thebaynet.com/ticking-time-bombs-nearly-100-coal-ash-dumps-pepper-the-chesapeake-bay-watershed/>

#### 2016 – TITLE VI CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT FILED

Residents of Brandywine filed a Title VI civil-rights complaint with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency alleging discriminatory environmental permitting practices and cumulative industrial burden in the community.

#### REFERENCE ARCHIVE

BTB Coalition – Title VI Record Materials

<https://www.btbcoalition.org/titlevi.html>

#### 2019 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION AGREEMENT (IRA)

The Title VI complaint led to an Informal Resolution Agreement requiring structured engagement with directly impacted residents in environmental decision-making processes.

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<sup>4</sup> Supporting reference materials transmitted with or available in connection with this packet include: (1) *Complaint Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (May 11, 2016), Final Complaint&Exhibits\_05-11-...

; (2) *Rapid Health Impact Assessment: The Potential Health Impacts of Incinerators and Power Plant Byproducts on Communities in Brandywine, MD* (2015), HIABrandywine

; (3) Brandywine Health Impact Assessment presentation materials, Brandywine\_HIAPresentation(WEB)

; (4) NAACP, *Fumes Across the Fence-Line*; and (5) background environmental justice scholarship regarding community health, zoning, discriminatory siting, and cumulative burden, including Wilson (2009) and Wilson (2010).

## **2020–PRESENT – CONTINUING INDUSTRIAL PRESSURE**

Additional industrial activities including aggregate extraction, material processing, and concrete batching operations continue to contribute to cumulative environmental burden within the Brandywine area.

Community Environmental Justice Mapping

Environmental justice mapping and industrial burden analysis prepared by the Brandywine TB Southern Region Neighborhood Coalition identifies concentrated industrial activity affecting the Brandywine community.

## **REFERENCE MAP ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

BTB Coalition Environmental Justice Mapping (see page 8)

[https://www.btbcoalition.org/index%20page%20images/EnvironmentalEjMap\(BTBWEB\)\\_01d.jpg](https://www.btbcoalition.org/index%20page%20images/EnvironmentalEjMap(BTBWEB)_01d.jpg)

## **CURRENT LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

The 2026 CHERISH Act proposes a classification-based environmental justice permitting framework using percentile rankings within the Maryland Environmental Justice Screening Tool.

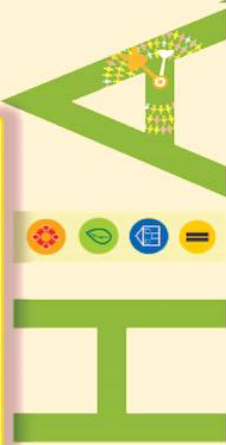
The guardrail amendments submitted by BTB Coalition are intended to ensure that environmental justice protections remain grounded in documented environmental burden rather than fluctuating statistical thresholds.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS TIMELINE**

This timeline provides legislative context supporting the proposed CHERISH Act amendments and demonstrates the longstanding environmental justice record of the Brandywine community. Durable environmental justice requires durable statutory design.

# BRANDYWINE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARD MAP

## Brandywine Health Impact Assessment



Health impact assessment

Changes to decision & implementation

Changes to determinants of health

Changes to health outcomes

**OUR COMMUNITY**

**Citizens' Science Public Forum**

APRIL 2018

**OUR HEALTH**

Healthier Air

FEB 2018

**OUR RESILIENCY**

Local Resiliency

APRIL 2018

### POLLUTION MATTERS

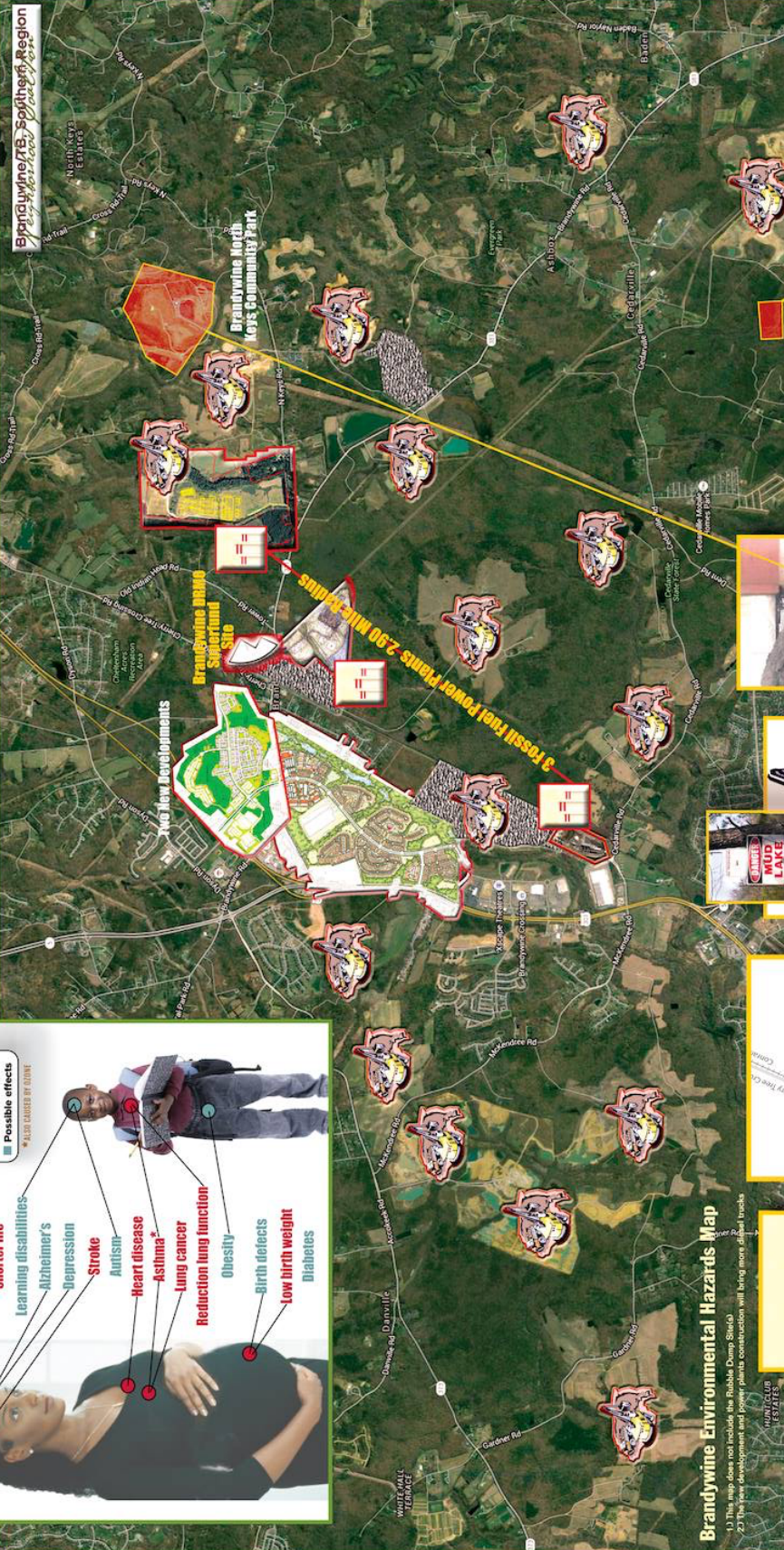
Thousands of studies have shown how air pollution can harm people, causing heart attacks, lung disease, and asthma. New research is finding a possible link between certain pollutants and autism, birth defects and childhood obesity, among other conditions.

**Caused by fine particles:**

- Shorter life
- Learning disabilities
- Alzheimer's
- Depression
- Stroke
- Autism
- Heart disease
- Asthma
- Lung cancer
- Reduction lung function
- Obesity
- Birth defects
- Low birth weight
- Diabetes

**Accepted effects** (Red box)  
**Possible effects** (Green box)  
**Other causes by heavy** (Blue box)

**Chronic Disease Prevention... environmental and zoning inequality** and chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and asthma are the leading causes of death and disability in disproportionately affect communities of color populations. Developing successful prevention strategies starts with recognizing the complex interplay of social factors that drive chronic diseases, and Brandywine's community Local Resiliency and Responsible Planning, adverse effects of development projects on human health, and on the promotion of healthy environments. Therefore, the development and promotion of instruments for the systematic evaluation and mitigation of health impacts of development is a primary concern. Prince George's County, Brandywine, Maryland has poorer health outcomes compared to the rest of the counties over 60% of deaths are related to chronic diseases.



**Transportation, Diesel Fumes & Carbon Emissions**

**Sludge Lagoon**

**Coal Mine Fly Ash Site**

**Aggregate Surface Mining Wash Plants • Mud Ponds**

**Brandywine DRMO Superfund**

**3 Fossil Fuel Gas Power Plants**

**13 Heavy Industrial Zone**

**HB 1287\_MTBMA\_UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michael Sakata

Position: UNF



Delegate Marc Korman, Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 10, 2026

**RE: HB 1287 – UNFAVORABLE – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association (“MTBMA”) has been and continues to serve as the voice for Maryland’s construction transportation industry since 1932. Our association is comprised of 250 members. MTBMA encourages, develops, and protects the prestige of the transportation construction and materials industry in Maryland by establishing and maintaining respected relationships with federal, state, and local public officials. We proactively work with regulatory agencies and governing bodies to represent the interests of the transportation industry and advocate for adequate state and federal funding for Maryland’s multimodal transportation system.

While House Bill 1287 is tailored specifically to generating stations, MTBMA respectfully opposes it as broader state policy because it would impose subjective analytic burdens on fundamental regulatory processes that jeopardize business certainty and investment in Maryland. Requiring detailed reports as a condition of obtaining a certificate of public convenience and necessity introduces significant procedural burden. These reports would require baseline assessments of environmental, public health burdens, and disparities in designated areas in order for a generating station project to proceed. The lack of clear thresholds or objective criteria for how these analyses must be evaluated by regulators creates uncertainty in permit outcomes and approvals, undermining investment decisions and long-range project planning.

Moreover, expanding environmental justice analysis requirements within generating station certification proceedings would establish a broader regulatory precedent that could extend similar obligations to other sectors. While environmental justice and community health are important considerations, incorporating new analytical frameworks without clearly defined standards creates uncertainty for businesses that rely on timely and predictable regulatory decisions. Companies planning large capital investments in Maryland, including infrastructure and energy projects, must be able to accurately assess regulatory risk. HB 1287’s approach could lengthen review timelines, increase compliance costs, and ultimately discourage the siting or expansion of critical energy infrastructure within the State.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1287.

Thank you,

Michael Sakata  
President and CEO  
Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association

**HB 1287\_MAA\_UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tim Smith

Position: UNF



Delegate Marc Korman, Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 10, 2026

**RE: HB 1287 – UNFAVORABLE – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Asphalt Association (MAA) represents approximately 110+ members, including 20 material producers, contractors, engineering firms, and associate members, supporting a 7,000-person workforce. MAA actively collaborates with regulatory agencies to advocate for the asphalt industry, ensuring fair regulations at both the state and federal levels. Additionally, we support adequate funding for Maryland's multimodal transportation system.

While House Bill 1287 is tailored specifically to generating stations, MAA respectfully opposes it as broader state policy because it would impose new, complex, and subjective analytic burdens on fundamental regulatory processes that jeopardize business certainty and investment in Maryland.

Requiring detailed reports as a condition of obtaining a certificate of public convenience and necessity introduces significant procedural complexity and expanded data requirements beyond current standards. These reports would require baseline assessments of environmental and public health burdens and disparities in designated areas in order for a generating station project to proceed. The lack of clear thresholds or objective criteria for how these analyses must be evaluated by regulators creates uncertainty in permit outcomes and approvals, undermining investment decisions and long-range project planning.

Moreover, subjecting generating station certifications to expanded environmental justice analysis in this manner sets a broader regulatory precedent that invites similar burdens across other sectors. While environmental justice and community health are important considerations, using novel analytical frameworks without defined standards increases risks for business operations that depend on timely and predictable regulatory determinations. Maryland companies that plan large capital investments, including infrastructure and energy projects, must be able to assess regulatory risk; HB 1287's approach could prolong review timelines, raise compliance costs, and discourage location or expansion of critical energy infrastructure within the State.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1287 and to consider alternative approaches that address environmental justice goals without compromising regulatory clarity and economic competitiveness.

Sincerely,

Tim E. Smith, P.E.  
President  
Maryland Asphalt Association

# **HB 1287\_MDCC\_CPCN CHERISH Our Communities Act\_INFO**

Uploaded by: Hannah Allen

Position: INFO



## House Bill 1287

Date: March 13, 2026

Committee: Environment & Transportation

**Position: Information**

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Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 7,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

House Bill 1287 (HB 1287) would require a substantial new set of analytical requirements for applications seeking a certificate of public convenience and necessity for certain electric generating stations located near designated “at-risk” census tracts, and would authorize the Maryland Public Service Commission to deny such applications based on potential environmental or public health stressors identified through that analysis.

While understanding the intent to ensure community impacts are considered, we are concerned that the additional regulatory and procedural burdens established under this bill will make it harder to build new sources of power generation in Maryland. By adding complex reporting requirements and subjective evaluative criteria tied to environmental justice metrics, the bill creates uncertainty and potential delay in the siting and approval of new generation facilities. Developers could face increased costs and longer timelines to secure necessary approvals, which may discourage investment in essential infrastructure.

Maryland currently relies on neighboring states for a significant portion of our electricity supply. Compounding that challenge, regional retirements of existing in-state power plants in recent years have underscored the need for a diversified and resilient generation portfolio. Additional barriers to new generation construction could hamper efforts to maintain grid reliability, attract new energy investments, and support economic growth. Requiring further procedural hurdles, even where environmental and public health considerations are already addressed through existing regulatory frameworks, risks exacerbating these issues at a time when expanding in-state capacity should be a priority.

Any policy that inadvertently deters new generation development may undermine the state's energy security and impede progress toward a stable, affordable and self-sufficient energy future.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments on **HB 1287**.

**Letter of Information \_ HB 1287 \_ PSC**

Uploaded by: Kumar Barve

Position: INFO

KUMAR P. BARVE  
CHAIR

FREDERICK H. HOOVER, JR.  
BONNIE A. SUCHMAN  
ODOGWU OBI LINTON  
RYAN C. MCLEAN



## PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Chair Marc Korman  
Environment and Transportation Committee  
250 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

### **RE: HB 1287 – Information – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - BURDEN Analysis (CHERISH Our Communities Act)**

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Public Service Commission (the Commission) appreciates the opportunity to provide this informational testimony for HB 1287. The Public Utilities Article (PUA) section §7–207 gives the Commission authority to approve applications for the siting of generating stations through the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN). Through that process, the Commission must review a number of factors to determine if the project is necessary and in the public’s interest. For fossil fuel generating station applications, an applicant-submitted EJ Score (environmental justice score) is one of those factors. HB 1287 expands CPCN application requirements for non-wind, non-solar or non-geothermal generating stations to include a baseline understanding of risk, disparities, and environmental needs (“BURDEN”) report.

While the Commission is committed to an ongoing focus on environmental and climate matters, HB 1287 removes the Commission’s discretion by compelling the Commission to make specific CPCN application adjudications in certain circumstances based only on the results of the BURDEN report. This creates a CPCN approval process that differs from any other CPCN application under the current PUA provisions, where the Commission weighs several factors, including the county’s recommendation, economics, aesthetics, historic sites, and the effects on climate change. Maintaining the Commission’s discretion in determining the public interest when considering a generating station project is critical to making a sound decision based on the totality of the evidence in the record.

The Commission notes that the bill may hinder the General Assembly’s recent efforts to attract new baseload generating stations to Maryland. The Next Generation Energy Act (2025) requires the Commission to establish a procurement process to support the development of additional generating facilities, including nuclear, to meet the State’s long-term resource needs. In December, the Commission confirmed that two natural gas generating station proposals met the criteria for inclusion in an expedited CPCN process enacted by the Next Generation Energy Act.

Under HB 1287, these projects would be subject to the new BURDEN reporting and CPCN requirements. This added complexity will affect the State's ability to bring new baseload generation online in a timely manner.

The Public Service Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide this informational testimony for your consideration for bill HB 1287. Please contact the Commission's Director of Legislative Affairs, Niki Wiggins at [irene.wiggins3@maryland.gov](mailto:irene.wiggins3@maryland.gov), if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kumar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kumar P. Barve  
Chair, Maryland Public Service Commission

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Position: INFO



Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Josh Kurtz, Secretary  
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

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March 13, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 1287 - FIRST READER**

**SHORT TITLE: CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY-BURDEN ANALYSIS  
(CHERISH OUR COMMUNITIES ACT)**

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

**EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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The Department of Natural Resources provides the following information on HB 1287.

This legislation would add additional requirements to the Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) process for specific generating stations (including coal, natural gas, and nuclear) located within an "at-risk census tract. The bill, as written, would require these applicants to submit a BURDEN report with their application. The Power Plant Research Program (PPRP) would be required to review and validate the findings of a BURDEN report submitted by the applicant for projects located within at-risk census tract and prepare an environmental assessment with a determination of whether approving the proposed application for a CPCN will cause or contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors or indicators in the at-risk census tract and surrounding tracts in a 1.5 mile radius that are higher than those in other areas in the State.

Additionally, the bill as currently drafted, would require PPRP propose additional recommended conditions for the Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider. These conditions would be applied if the Commission chooses to grant the CPCN, and would require the applicant to demonstrate that the activity outlined in the CPCN will benefit the public interest within the at-risk census tract where the project is planned. PPRP's verification of the information and preparation of conditions for the PSC may require additional public engagement with communities in at-risk census tracts in the BURDEN report submitted by the applicant.

If the bill were to be amended to remove the PSC's discretionary authority, or mandating the denial of a project based solely on the findings of a BURDEN report, could impede the introduction of new generation to the grid. Consequently, this action could negatively affect ratepayers.

The Department has had additional conversations with the bill sponsor, who has provided further insight into how this bill would intersect with SB 781/HB1268. The BURDEN report requirements in both bills are consistent, and much of the necessary data can be found in the Maryland EJ tool created and maintained by the Maryland Department of the Environment. This could reduce the fiscal and operational impact of this legislation on PPRP.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
[lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov](mailto:lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov) ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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The PSC relies on PPRP for an independent technical, environmental, and socioeconomic analyses. Presently, CPCN applications include an EJ Report describing the EJ Score for the proposed site and surrounding census tracts in a 3-mile radius using MDE's EJ Tool and signed statement of public engagement and participation certification that the applicant made at least one attempt to engage affected communities prior to filing the application if in an EJ census tract (See COMAR 20.79.01.06 and 20.79.01.04). PPRP checks for whether the application includes this information and verifies the EJ Score using MDE's EJ tool. The information is presented to the PSC in PPRP's PAR for the PSC. In addition to this information, this bill will require PPRP to review the BURDEN report and present findings in its project assessment review to the PSC as described above.

## **BILL EXPLANATION**

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House Bill 1287 adds several additional requirements to the existing law regarding applications for CPCNs for specific generating stations located within an "at-risk census tract. The bill requires the PSC to determine if the proposed facility will contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors that are higher than those borne by other areas in the state. The Commission is required to determine if the application, combined with other stressors, will cause or contribute to adverse environmental or public health stressors higher than those in other areas of the state. The Commission must deny the application if such adverse stressors are found, unless the applicant demonstrates an overriding public interest served by the station in that specific location. If approved under this condition, the Commission must impose protective conditions on the certificate