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February 11, 2020

Environment and Transportation Committee

Maryland House of Delegates

A. Adar Ayira, Senior Director Strategy and Racial Equity

Associated Black Charities

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Associated Black Charities (ABC) is a public foundation in the State of Maryland. We seek to change the economic outcomes for African American Marylanders through working to eliminate race-based structural and institutional barriers which truncate opportunity and access for those within and/or aspiring to be in the Maryland workforce, and which negatively impact the economic viability of the state.

The incorporation of a Racial Equity Lens in every level of policy making is essential in “seeding success” for all Maryland communities by working to counteract the unfortunate economic and social legacies of our country’s – and this state’s – racialized history.

As ABC explains in its policy education document “Policy Applications of a Racial Equity Lens: Ten Essential Questions for Policy Development, Review and Evaluation”, analyzing the impact of policies on racial and other marginalized groups is not new, either nationally or internationally. Cities such as Seattle (WA), Madison (WI), St. Paul (MN), and Iowa City (IA) have incorporated procedures for determining disparate racialized impacts of policies on historically marginalized populations. On issues specific to environmental concerns like those addressed in the unamended HR209, Maryland has an opportunity to provide a model for moving forward in ways that do not disproportionately penalize those least able to bear the economic burden.

The first question in ABC’s “Ten Essential Questions” brochure is “How is an equity lens incorporated within the policy?” We were asked this question as it relates to HR209 and understand that the proposed amendment seeks to ensure that that question is addressed.

Other questions that should be considered in ensuring that economically marginalized Marylanders are protected include:

- Does the legislation unequivocally protect those whom would be negatively and disproportionately burdened by the imposed fees?
- Is there a disproportionate economic burden borne by African American, non-Black people of color, and other low wage workers, as well as by WIC and SNAP recipients in the State?
- Who will be disproportionately impacted?