



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

Low House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Room 200 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Phone 410-841-3374 | 301-858-3374 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3374 · Fax 410-841-3342 | 301-858-3342

latino.caucus@house.state.md.us · www.mdlatinocaucus.org

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TO: Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice Chair  
Environment and Transportation Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: January 21, 2021

RE: HB80 Department of Transportation and Department of the Environment - Purple Line Tree Replacement Plan

### **The MLLC supports HB80 Department of Transportation and Department of the Environment - Purple Line Tree Replacement Plan.**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB80.

Trees are an essential part of our environment. They provide us with oxygen, clean air, and beauty. Trees can alter our surroundings by combating climate change, moderating temperatures, harboring wildlife, and even serving as windbreakers. Some Maryland communities lack adequate tree life, thus, experience a huge disadvantage when it comes to regulated temperatures and air quality.

Based on a [report](#) led by the Hispanic Access Foundation and the Center for American Progress, communities of color are almost three times more likely than white communities to live in “nature deprived” areas, locations that have little to no access to parks, paths, and green spaces. Black and Brown families are also more likely to live in “[heat islands](#),” typically metropolitan areas that are warmer due to buildings, roads, and infrastructure that absorb and re-emit the sun’s heat creating warmer cities than their neighboring rural or suburban areas. An easy method to fight these rising temperatures is planting trees.

Construction of the Purple Line began in August 2017. Trees were removed for the construction along the proposed line route, depriving the surrounding homes of a crucial environmental benefit. These communities were left without shade (making the pedestrian experience more difficult in the summer), with rapidly decreasing local air quality, and an exacerbation of the heat island effect in communities already burdened by multiple environmental justice challenges. While this construction continues to take place, it is imperative that action starts to be taken to reestablish the natural health of the communities affected.

HB80 requires the MDOT, Maryland Department of Environment, and other agencies to develop a replanting plan for these trees in the communities they were removed from. The Department will consult affected businesses, community members, county, and municipal governments, and affected residents. This plan provides for the replacement of trees in each community where trees are removed due to the Purple Line construction. Maryland knows the detrimental effects of environmental injustices and climate change. We must act now before it is too late and restore these trees.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB80.