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Committee

Chair

Government Operations and
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House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Appropriations Committee

In support of House Bill 1033

Environment and energy: Investment in Overburdened Communities

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

House Bill 1033 is one piece of a larger effort to ensure that low income and historically disadvantaged communities are a focal point of legislation and investment aimed at environmental reform and energy modernization.

Impoverished communities have traditionally suffered a disproportionate amount of environmental harms, and are often forgotten when environmental reforms are made.¹ Communities of color with low education, high poverty, and high unemployment rates are less likely to receive investments in new or innovative environmental services and are also more likely to be positioned near industrial areas, major highways, or hazardous waste disposal sites.² A recent study found that communities which were subjected to the racially discriminatory

¹ Ohio State University. "Low-income, black neighborhoods still hit hard by air pollution." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/08/190810094052.htm. Accessed March 9, 2022.

² Pyzyk, Katie; "Study: Low Income Neighborhoods disproportionately feel environmental burdens"; Published Dec 4, 2018;; <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/study-low-income-neighborhoods-disproportionately-feel-environmental-burde/543498/>; accessed March 9, 2022.

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practice of redlining had a correlation with higher rates of air pollution from Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), and Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}).³ This statistic is just one example of the ways in which communities that bore the brunt of racist legislation in the 20th century are disproportionately affected by environmental harms today.

HB 1033 seeks to redress this wrong by requiring the Department of the Environment to develop policies and recommendations to ensure at least 40% of overall funding for environmental reform and energy modernization in the State is directed to benefit “overburdened communities.”

This definition of overburdened communities, as amended, is consistent with House Bill 880, providing for uniformity in the legislature’s Environmental Justice reforms. Additionally, this amended definition of overburdened communities provides a more inclusive standard for receiving the protections of HB1033, and helping communities still dealing with the residual effects of racist policies. Ultimately, this amendment helps the bill to better assist the communities which it is intended to protect.

HB1033 is one mechanism to right a historic wrong. If enacted, HB 1033 will provide meaningful solutions to communities across Maryland.

I urge the Committee to act favorably on House Bill 1033.

March 15, 2022.

³ Zhong, Raymond and Popvich, Danja; “How Air Pollution Across America Reflects racist Policy from 1930’s”; The New York Times; March 9, 2022;<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/climate/redlining-racism-air-pollution.html>; accessed March 9, 2022.