

February 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and Delegates of the Environment & Transportation Committee,

We, the undersigned coalition of organizations and supporters across Maryland, urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass HB596, the Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights.

The amendment would ensure that (1) each person, as a matter of human dignity, has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful and sustainable environment, and (2) the state, as the trustee of Maryland's natural resources, including its air, water, lands, wildlife, and ecosystems, shall protect, conserve, and enhance them for the benefit of current and future generations.

The state of Maryland recognized that "each person has the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment," when it passed the Maryland Environmental Policy Act of 1973. Unfortunately, the Act has not been sufficiently effective.

By elevating the right to a healthful environment to the same level as such fundamental rights as freedoms of the press, religion, and speech, the Amendment will provide constitutionally based protections in addition to those set forth in existing environmental laws and regulations. The Amendment also makes explicit the State's trustee role as a steward of our environment and the constitutional obligation to protect this right.

These principles will strengthen the basis for addressing the cumulative effects of legacy pollution that disproportionately impact many of our minority and low-income communities, and will steer Maryland toward true sustainability. They will provide a solid foundation for improved laws, regulations and programs at all levels of government, and the additional scrutiny that comes from constitutional provisions will serve as a guardrail against the most egregious forms of harmful action, protecting all Marylanders, now and in future generations.

Similar amendments have been constructive and responsible contributors to the environmental and governmental frameworks of other states (Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island) that have adopted them. New York State adopted its version of the amendment in November 2021, with 68.9 percent of voters approving it.

We ask that you support and pass HB596, the proposed Maryland Constitutional Amendment for Environmental Human Rights in 2022. Our communities, especially those that are marginalized, our children, our grandchildren, and future generations need us to act now.

Nina Beth Cardin, Director, Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights

Rosa Hance, Chair, Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

1199 SEIU

17 for Peace and Justice

350 Montgomery County
Addressing the System
Alien AME Church, Caroline County
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
AMP Creeks Council
Anacostia Watershed Society
Annapolis Green
Assateague Coastal Trust
Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Audubon Naturalist Society
Backyard Bounty
Baltimore Beyond Plastic
BALTIMORE Blue+Green+Just
Baltimore Board of Rabbis
Baltimore City Climate Parents
Baltimore County Progressive Democrats Club
Baltimore Green Space - A Land Trust for Community Managed Open Space Inc.
Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church
Be the Change
Beth Am Synagogue Environmental Team & Social Action Committee
Black Swamp Creek Land Trust
Blue Water Baltimore
Cedar Lane Environmental Justice Ministry
Center for Progressive Reform
Central Maryland Beekeepers Association
CMEC (Central Maryland Ecumenical Council)
Charles County Medical Society
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chesapeake Earth Holders Community of Engaged Buddhism
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Christ Our Anchor Presbyterian Church
Clean Water Action
Climate Law & Policy Project
Climate Parents of Prince George's
Climate XChange
Crab Creek Conservancy, Inc.
Defensores de la Cuenca
DoTheMostGood MoCo MD
Echotopia LLC
Environmental Action Club of Loyola University Maryland
Environmental Justice Coalition
Episcopal Cathedral of the Incarnation
Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ
Faith Presbyterian Church
Farm Alliance of Baltimore
First Presbyterian Church of Annapolis
Food & Water Watch
Frack Free Frostburg
Frederick Friends Meeting
Friends of The Jones Falls
Friends of Ruth B. Swann Park
Friends School of Baltimore Green Club
Govans Presbyterian Church
Gracefully Green, LLC

Green Amendments for the Generations
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
GreenGrace Maryland Episcopal Environmental Ministry
Green Towson Alliance
Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
Harford County Climate Action
HoCo Climate Action
Homewood Friends Meeting (Baltimore)
Howard County Board of Rabbis
Howard County Conservancy
Howard EcoWorks
InDiGO:Inward Discovery Grows Outdoors
Indivisible Worcester Maryland
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
Islamic Society of Washington Area
Izaak Walton League of America, Sportsman's Chapter
JemTech Environmental LLC
Jewish Community Relations Council, Jewish Federation of Howard County
Ji'Aire's Workgroup Mental Health and Wellness
Langley Park Civic Association, Inc.
League of Women Voters Maryland
Malouf & Associates, P.C.
Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home
Maryland Children's Environmental Health Coalition
Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Ornithological Society

Maryland Pesticide Education Network

Maryland Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

Maryland Presbyterian Church

Maryland Public Health Association

Maryland Votes for Animals

Memorial Episcopal Church

MLC Climate Justice Wing

Mountain Maryland Movement

Multifaith Alliance of Climate Stewards - Frederick

NAACP Maryland State Conference

National Aquarium

National Parks Conservation Association

Neighborhood Sun Benefit Corp

NeighborSpace of Baltimore County

New Ark United Church of Christ

Northeast Catholic Community

Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Old-Growth Forest Network

Potomac Conservancy

Prescient Energy LLC

Preservation Maryland

Progressive Cheverly

Rachel Carson Council

Rebuild Maryland Coalition

Roland Park Presbyterian Church

RoundPeg Benefit LLC

Safe Skies Maryland

SGA Sustainability Committee

ShoreRivers

St. Ignatius Church Baltimore
St. John's United Methodist Church, Baltimore City
St. Luke's Episcopal Church Eastport
St. Margaret's Church of Annapolis
St. Matthew Church Green Team
Stony Run Friends Meeting
Sunrise Movement Baltimore
Sunrise Movement Howard County
Sunrise Movement Maryland
Surfrider Foundation
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Temple Shalom
The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
The Episcopal Church of St. Michael and All Angels
The Episcopal Church of the Redeemer
The Farm at Our House
The Historic St. James Episcopal Church
The Vineyards at Dodon
Together We Will - Western Maryland
Trash Free Maryland
Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
University of Maryland School of Nursing
Utility Advisors Inc
Washington College Student Government Association
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Wicomico Environmental Trust
WISE