



Secular Maryland

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February 23, 2022

HB 596 - SUPPORT

Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

We depend on clean air, clean water, healthy soil, and a stable environment. Maryland residents face ongoing exposures to pollutants in the air, water, and land which have negatively impacted public health with increased rates of chronic obstructive pulmonary

disease [DeVries R, Kriebel D, Sama S. Outdoor Air Pollution and COPD-Related Emergency Department Visits, Hospital Admissions, and Mortality: A Meta-Analysis. *COPD*. 2017 Feb;14(1):113-121. doi: 10.1080/15412555.2016.1216956. Epub 2016 Aug 26. PMID: 27564008], **chronic bronchitis** [Hooper LG, Young MT, Keller JP, Szpiro AA, O'Brien KM, Sandler DP, Vedal S, Kaufman JD, London SJ. Ambient Air Pollution and Chronic Bronchitis in a Cohort of U.S. Women. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2018 Feb 6;126(2):027005. doi: 10.1289/EHP2199. PMID: 29410384; PMCID: PMC6066337], **emphysema** [Wang M, Aaron CP, Madrigano J, Hoffman EA, Angelini E, Yang J, Laine A, Vetterli TM, Kinney PL, Sampson PD, Sheppard LE, Szpiro AA, Adar SD, Kirwa K, Smith B, Lederer DJ, Diez-Roux AV, Vedal S, Kaufman JD, Barr RG. Association Between Long-term Exposure to Ambient Air Pollution and Change in Quantitatively Assessed Emphysema and Lung Function. *JAMA*. 2019 Aug 13;322(6):546-556. doi: 10.1001/jama.2019.10255. PMID: 31408135; PMCID: PMC6692674], **hemorrhagic stroke** [Sun S, Stewart JD, Eliot MN, Yanosky JD, Liao D, Tinker LF, Eaton CB, Whitsel EA, Wellenius GA. Short-term exposure to air pollution and incidence of stroke in the Women's Health Initiative. *Environ Int*. 2019 Nov;132:105065. doi: 10.1016/j.envint.2019.105065. Epub 2019 Aug 2. PMID: 31382185; PMCID: PMC6754774], **breast cancer** [Cheng I, Tseng C, Wu J, Yang J, Conroy SM, Shariff-Marco S, Li L, Hertz A, Gomez SL, Le Marchand L, Whittemore AS, Stram DO, Ritz B, Wu AH. Association between ambient air pollution and breast cancer risk: The multiethnic cohort study. *Int J Cancer*. 2020 Feb 1;146(3):699-711. doi: 10.1002/ijc.32308. Epub 2019 Apr 25. PMID: 30924138; PMCID: PMC6765455], **non-Hodgkins lymphoma** [Smith MT, Jones RM, Smith AH. Benzene exposure and risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*. 2007 Mar;16(3):385-91. doi: 10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-06-1057. Epub 2007 Mar 2. PMID: 17337645], **lung cancer** [Lin CK, Lin RT, Chen T, Zigler C, Wei Y, Christiani DC. A global perspective on coal-fired power plants and burden of lung cancer. *Environ Health*. 2019 Jan 28;18(1):9. doi: 10.1186/s12940-019-0448-8. PMID: 30691464; PMCID: PMC6350330], **various severe neurological disorders including dementia** [Shi L, Wu X, Danesh Yazdi M, Braun D, Abu Awad Y, Wei Y, Liu P, Di Q, Wang Y, Schwartz J, Dominici F, Kioumourtoglou MA, Zanobetti A. Long-term effects of PM2.5 on neurological disorders in the American Medicare population: a longitudinal cohort study. *Lancet Planet Health*. 2020 Dec;4(12):e557-e565. doi: 10.1016/S2542-4358(20)30111-1. PMID: 33011111; PMCID: PMC7711111]

10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30227-8. Epub 2020 Oct 19. PMID: 33091388; PMCID: PMC7720425]. The pandemic has revealed that increased exposure to air pollution increased the likelihood of Covid19 mortality [Wu X, Nethery RC, Sabath BM, Braun D, Dominici F. Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: A nationwide cross-sectional study. Preprint. medRxiv. 2020;2020.04.05.20054502. Published 2020 Apr 7. doi:10.1101/2020.04.05.20054502].

In 1973 the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Environmental Policy Act which recognized that “each person has the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment.” Yet we have not officially established this as our right right in the state constitution. By enacting this amendment we create an enforceable right to a healthful environment. We strengthen state and local governments’ ability to protect natural resources via laws and regulations. We create a legal guardrail to prevent the most egregious forms of environmental harm.

Our environment depends on us, no supernatural agent will save us from ourselves. We either diminish our environment or we protect and enhance it by our inactions or actions. Secular Maryland supports this amendment.

Respectfully,
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