



Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Bill Number: HB 596

Title: Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights

Hearing Date: February 23, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM) strongly supports *House Bill 596 – Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights*. The amendment would add the right to a healthful and sustainable environment to the Declaration of Rights of the Maryland State Constitution.

ACNM recognizes the connection between a healthy environment and positive birth outcomes. Studies have shown that poor quality environments are related to negative birth outcomes¹:

- Exposure to air pollution can be related to low birth weight and preterm birth
- Exposure to lead may cause preterm birth, low birth rate, and spontaneous fetal death or miscarriage
- Some pesticides have been linked in human studies with problems including miscarriages, birth defects, and learning or developmental disabilities in children

ACNM also recognizes that often, black and brown communities face the greatest environmental hazards in Maryland. Due to this disparity, it is also seen that environmentally related poor birth outcomes are most often found in black and brown communities.

Maryland should make it a priority to ensure families have a healthy environment to ensure better health outcomes for everyone. We ask for a favorable report on this legislation. If we can provide any further information, please contact Suhani Chitalia at schitalia@policypartners.net.

ⁱ <https://tracking.idph.iowa.gov/People-Community/reproduction-and-birth/Reproductive-Outcomes-and-the-Environment>