

February 23, 2022

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**TESTIMONY ON HB0596 – POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights**

**TO:** Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

**FROM:** Ioana Stoica

**My name is Ioana Stoica. I am a resident of District 21. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0596, which would establish a constitutional amendment that would affirm the fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment with access to clean air, water, land and a stable climate. A constitutional right, as opposed to a regular law, would ensure that environmental protection is the highest obligation of the government, and not merely an aspirational goal.**

As a new parent, and as a teacher, I am called to consider our future generations in enacting present choices. Pollution and environmental degradation are damaging the health of our children – life expectancy is decreasing, in large part due to the multifaceted effects of climate change. In addition, cases of certain cancers, asthma, and other linked conditions are on the rise. My close family member, a young woman, is currently in remission from bladder cancer; this type of growth is uncommon in younger people, and in women, but studies are showing an increasing prevalence that is linked to air pollution.

The environmental human rights amendment would allow Maryland to be a healthier place to live through the reduction of environmental harms, and would help prioritize environmental concerns in future legislation and development. It would also help protect communities of color and low-income neighborhoods, which currently unfairly bear the disproportionate burden of environmental pollution and degradation and the resulting health disparities. This is a moral issue: our state must choose to put the interests the health of Marylanders, and the future of our children, first.

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “All human beings depend on the environment in which we live. A safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is integral to the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. Without a healthy environment, we are unable to fulfil our aspirations. We may not have access to even the minimum standards of human dignity.” **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0596.**

Thank you,

Ioana Stoica