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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Bill 596 – Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 23, 2022

SUPPORT

Background: House Bill 596 (HB596) proposes a constitutional amendment to establish that every person has the fundamental right to a healthful and sustainable environment. The amendment would require the State to serve as the trustee of the State's natural resources, including the air, land, water, wildlife, and ecosystems of the State, and to conserve, protect, and enhance the State's natural resources for the benefit of every person, including present and future generations.

Written Comments: The urgency of the climate crisis and the inequity of its consequences, cannot be understated. It is the single greatest existential threat we face right now, and it therefore needs to be addressed *now*. The measures outlined in this bill are ambitious and will not be easy, but are necessary. For certain parts of our state, it already is too late, and if we do not act, it will be too late for the rest.

The Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* teaches us to repair the world in which we live in. Jewish law clearly states that we are not to destroy the public domain. If passed, this bill would immediately put us on the track to reverse decades of pollution that have contributed significantly to the decline of our environment and has for generations disproportionately impacted communities of color.

The Baltimore Jewish Council and the The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore are committed to repairing our world. We represent The Pearlstone Center in Reisterstown, MD, a conference center and farm that employs and teaches sustainable practices, many of which are called for in this bill. We encourage this committee to join us in our mission to create a cleaner Maryland that is healthier for everyone. With this in mind, the Baltimore Jewish Council urges a favorable report of HB 596.

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

BALTIMORE JEWISH COUNCIL

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