

February 21, 2022

To: Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee

Subj: Testimony on Behalf of HB596

In reference to HB596 (Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights), Roland Park Presbyterian Church supports this bill and urges you to approve its passage to the floor of the House of Delegates. As both a Presbyterian Church (USA) designated Earth Care congregation and a Matthew 25 - Dismantling Structural Racism congregation, our church is deeply committed to the stewardship and quality of our air, water, soil, and food and for ensuring that all people live in healthy environments. It is our strong belief that we must be responsible stewards of the earth and its inhabitants and that we must "do justice" and "love our neighbor as ourselves."

We recognize that our government has allowed unacceptable contamination of the environmental systems that sustain all life and that we have condoned burdening poorer and minority communities with environmental hazards that threaten their health and well-being. There is a well-documented history of environmental racism in past decisions to place polluting industries in economically disadvantaged communities where minorities were historically relegated, exposing them to legalized environmental and health degradation.

Therefore, we believe that the right to a safe and healthy environment must be codified into our state constitution to improve legal protections for all our citizens and residents in regard to the environment in which we live. We ask that you support the amendment and work to ensure that it will be on the Maryland ballot this year.

Sincerely,
The Session of Roland Park Presbyterian Church
Roland Park Presbyterian Church Earth Care Committee
Roland Park Presbyterian Church Racial Justice Task Force