



OUR MISSION:

Working to enhance the economic prosperity of greater Silver Spring through robust promotion of our member businesses and unrelenting advocacy on their behalf.

**HB596 – Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights
Environment and Transportation Committee
February 23, 2022
UNFAVORABLE**

On behalf of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, representing 400 member organizations, including very small businesses with fewer than ten employees and several nonprofits, in the greater Silver Spring area of Montgomery County, I write to express our opposition to HB596 – Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights.

While HB596 may seem like a “feel good” bill that would be supported by everyone, we are concerned that it has broad ramifications which legislators may have ignored.

Of course, “The State must (1) serve as the trustee of the State’s natural resources, including the air, land, water, wildlife, and ecosystems of the State and (2) conserve, protect, and enhance the State’s natural resources for the benefit of every person, including present and future generations.” But does the State really have control over everything in the air, land, and water in our community? Is that even possible? The recent pandemic should be evidence that neither the State, nor any human being can “control” what is in our air. Could the State have guaranteed that the air through we breathed the coronavirus was “healthful”? Had the COVID-19 pandemic been a real biological warfare agent, could that State have assured that every person had a healthful and sustainable environment?

Sure, these examples may seem a bit extreme, and not exactly what legislators proposing this bill are considering. But they do illustrate the point made in the fiscal analysis.

“Assuming ratification by the voters, the bill may result in additional litigation [at both the State and local levels, though] the magnitude of any such increase cannot be estimated at this time. To the extent that there is a significant increase in litigation, State expenditures (all fund types) increase beginning as early as FY 2023.”

Further, it may subject small businesses to various lawsuits, justified or not, that will increase costs.

For these reasons, the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce respectfully requests a **UNFAVORABLE committee report on HB596.**

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