

Committee: Appropriations
Testimony: Environmental Justice - Investment in Infrastructure Construction Projects
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 6, 2024

Ernesto Villasenor, Jr., J.D
Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

On behalf of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund, we strongly support the act concerning Environmental Justice – Investment in Infrastructure Construction Projects (House Bill 842), which addresses critical issues related to infrastructure investment and equity in our state. This bill represents a vital step forward in ensuring that federal funds are utilized responsibly and equitably, particularly in communities that have historically faced disproportionate burdens.

House Bill 842 outlines a comprehensive framework for the administration of federal funds, emphasizing the importance of avoiding substantial burdens to overburdened communities, underserved communities, communities of color, and those with a high percentage of low-to-moderate-income households. By prioritizing these communities, the bill aims to rectify long standing disparities and promote economic and environmental justice.

One of the key provisions of this legislation is the requirement for state agencies to allocate a minimum of 40% of federal funds to infrastructure construction projects in overburdened and underserved communities, and an additional 40% to projects in communities of color and those with a high percentage of low-to-moderate-income households. This allocation ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed, addressing critical infrastructure deficiencies and fostering inclusive economic development.

Furthermore, House Bill 842 establishes the Justice40 Committee, tasked with identifying infrastructure deficiencies and recommending projects for federal funding. The committee comprises representatives from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that the voices of impacted communities are heard in the decision-making process. By promoting transparency and community engagement, the committee plays a crucial role in providing clear guidelines to state agencies on how to use Federal funds to support infrastructure projects in underserved communities, with a focus on improving climate, labor conditions, and equity outcomes.

Importantly, this legislation requires state agencies to submit regular reports to the General Assembly, detailing how federal funds are being utilized and evaluating the success of



investment efforts. This accountability mechanism ensures that resources are effectively deployed to benefit overburdened communities and achieve the goals outlined in the bill.

In summary, House Bill 842 offers a significant chance to tackle disparities in infrastructure investment and promote environmental justice and economic empowerment. We strongly encourage the committee to find House Bill 842 favorable and expedite its approval for the well-being of all our state's residents.

CONTACT

Ernesto Villaseñor, Jr., JD | Policy Manager
Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund
ernesto@chesapeakeclimate.org | 310-465-6943

