

# CHERISH Our Communities Act



from Cumulative Harms  
to Environmental Restoration  
for Improving our Shared Health

The CHERISH Our Communities Act will reform Maryland's system of issuing permits to pollute to protect community health against environmental injustice.

## WHY DO WE NEED THE CHERISH ACT?

In some communities in Maryland, every time someone takes a breath, they're breathing in toxins from dozens or more of polluting facilities at once. All of this pollution added together can cause more serious health problems than any single facility alone. This leads to greater cancer risks, shorter lifespans, and worse overall health especially in low-wealth, Black, and other communities of color in Maryland.

These communities have faced more pollution than others throughout history, and still do today. In South Baltimore, just four pollutants from two waste incinerators cause \$97 million worth of health damages every year – and those are just two out of more than 70 polluters in the area.

## TARGETING PROTECTIONS

The CHERISH Act defines at-risk communities across Maryland that are disproportionately burdened with pollution, based on scientific metrics.

It also identifies types of permits that contribute to pollution harming public health, based on communities' priorities.

The CHERISH Act applies to applications for these permits in these communities.

## EXPANDING PUBLIC INPUT

Currently, the state must take public comments and hold public hearings for many types of permits – but many of the permits with the biggest impacts on environmental justice communities are left out, including some types of air pollution permits and waste disposal permits. This means that communities usually don't get the opportunity to make their voices heard.

The CHERISH Act requires a public comment process on these permits for the first time, improving the community's opportunity to shape decisions.



## PROVIDING IMPORTANT DATA

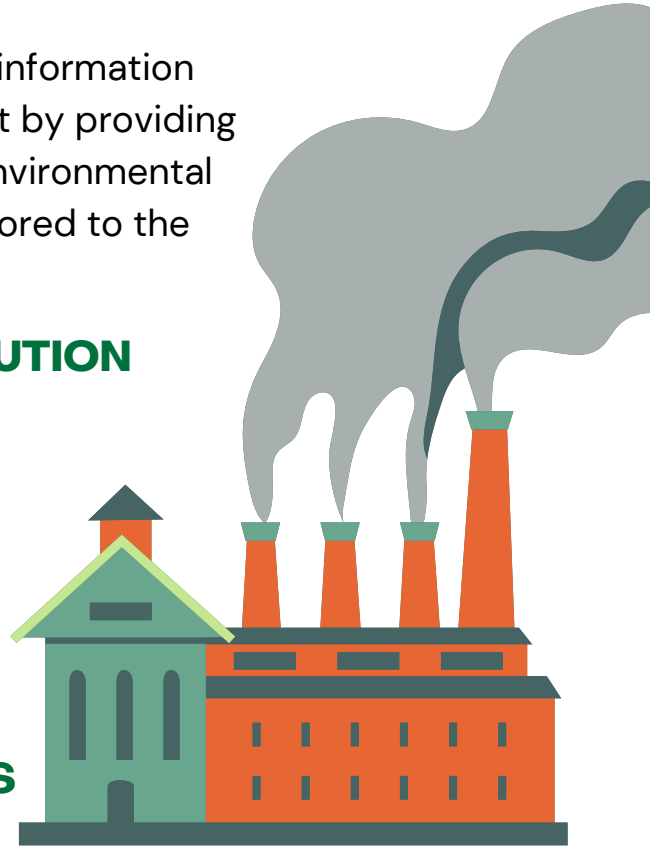
The CHERISH Act ensures that the state gets the information needed to make an informed decision on a permit by providing Baseline Understanding of Risk, Disparities, and Environmental Needs (BURDEN) Report: a data-driven report tailored to the situation.

## PREVENTING AND REDUCING POLLUTION

The CHERISH Act requires that new or expanding facilities that would make pollution worse in an already overburdened community will be barred from getting their permits to pollute, and facilities that already contribute too much pollution must reduce their emissions.

## ENFORCING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

If a polluter emits more pollution than their permit allows in one of the areas protected by the CHERISH Act, they will face higher penalties, and the community will receive compensation.



## IT'S TIME TO PASS THE CHERISH ACT

Everyone in Maryland deserves access to clean air and water, and healthy outdoor spaces. The CHERISH Act is in direct alignment with environmental justice goals set forth in [Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction plan](#) and in MDE's [Climate Implementation Plan](#).

For more than a decade, Maryland's legislature has considered bills like the CHERISH Act, but has failed to pass any of them. Now, Maryland is falling behind states like [New Jersey](#), [New York](#), and [Minnesota](#) who have already passed similar legislation. It's time for Maryland to join these states and become a leader in delivering environmental justice to its residents.

## Please join us to pass the CHERISH Our Communities Act!

Contact Governor Moore and your state representatives:

[www.cleanwater.org/MdCherish2026](http://www.cleanwater.org/MdCherish2026)

