



# Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities ANNUAL REPORT

Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and  
Sustainable Communities

Submitted: November 6, 2025

Maryland Department of the Environment



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Governor

Aruna Miller  
Lieutenant Governor

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# 2025 Annual Report

# Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities

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Strategies to Address Environmental Justice Challenges and  
Foster Sustainable Communities Across Maryland.

November 6, 2025

# MEMBERS

## Chair - Camille Burke

**Aneca Atkinson** - Maryland Department of  
Environment

**Del. Regina T. Boyce** - Maryland House of  
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**Monica Brooks** - Community Representative

**Robin Bailey** - Maryland Department of  
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**Donna Edward** - Maryland AFL-CIO

**Crystal Faison** - Community Representative

**Kellie Gaither** - Community Representative

**Tracey Garrett** - Community Representative

**Joseph Griffith** - Maryland Department of  
Planning

**Andrew Miller** - Community Representative

**Voncia Molock** - Business Representative

**Sen. Sara Love** - Maryland Senate

**John Papagni** - Maryland Department of  
Housing and Community Development

**Rebecca Rehr** - Environmental Organization

**Asha Smith** - Maryland Association of  
Counties

**Sacoby Wilson** - Academic Representative

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**USEFUL ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND SYMBOLS**

<b>AFL-CIO</b>	American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
<b>CEHPAC</b>	Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council
<b>CEJSC</b>	Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities
<b>EJ</b>	Environmental Justice
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency
<b>GGRA</b>	Maryland Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act
<b>MCCC</b>	Maryland Commission on Climate Change
<b>MDE</b>	Maryland Department of the Environment
<b>MDH</b>	Maryland Department of Health

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**MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, CAMILLE BURKE**

Camille Burke

As the Chair of the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC), and in my role at the Baltimore City Health Department, I'm keenly aware of the challenges many Maryland families and children face on the public health and environmental front. CEJSC has consistently taken a leadership role on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in Maryland. Following the Governor's signing of the Environmental Justice Executive Order and the Interagency Council on Environmental Justice, we will continue our efforts to make positive inroads internally in the State government and externally for the communities experiencing environmental justice (EJ) challenges daily. As the Chair of the Commission and a Marylander "for life," the Commission and I will continue to push elected officials and the citizenry of Maryland to fight for those frontline and fence line communities most in need of our support and assistance.

In service,

Camille Burke

# BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION OF THE CEJSC IN MARYLAND

In 1997, Maryland established a temporary advisory body called the Maryland Advisory Council on Environmental Justice for the purpose of providing policy recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly. The body recommended the creation of the Maryland CEJSC. In 2001, CEJSC was formalized under statute, and as a part of the charge of the Commission, CEJSC is required to submit this annual report pertaining to EJ issues in Maryland.

Environmental Justice is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies”. Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. In Maryland law, EJ is additionally defined as “equal protection from environmental and public health hazards for all people regardless of race, income, culture, and social status.”

CEJSC is charged with examining Environmental Justice issues and sustainable community opportunities that may be associated with public health, safety, economy, government, or any other manner associated with EJ and sustainable communities. CEJSC is also tasked with developing criteria to identify vulnerable communities and prioritizing action strategies toward the identified areas of the state that need immediate attention. Risk conditions are affected by a wide range of entities and social, historical, environmental, and economic factors, and similarly EJ requires an interdisciplinary approach to identify problems and solutions. The CEJSC advises state government agencies, the Governor, and the Maryland General Assembly by reviewing and analyzing the impact of state law and policies to address issues on EJ, sustainable communities, and compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. The Commission uses data sets and mapping tools to address these issues. The CEJSC also coordinates with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, and the Children’s Environmental Health Protection Advisory Council

(CEHPAC).

The Governor, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the House appoint a variety of members representing communities impacted by EJ issues, business organizations, environmental organizations, academic institutions with an EJ institute, and health experts.

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### **MDEnviroScreen**

The [MDEnviroScreen](#) tool provides data to inform decisions on siting, permitting, enforcement, and infrastructure improvements, aiming to help underserved and overburdened communities in Maryland by integrating demographic, socioeconomic, and state agency data. The tool's EJ score combines pollution measures and population vulnerability but does not include all available map layer data such as race/ethnicity, language proficiency, or age, though this information is provided for informational purposes. Collecting and displaying this data allows users to evaluate the relationships between demographics and pollution burden, and can be used to better understand issues related to environmental justice and racial equity in Maryland. MDE cautions users against using the "Underserved" map layer, or its subcategories, in any manner that would be considered discriminatory under applicable law.

Screening tools like MDEnviroScreen and the EPA EJSCREEN Tool are crucial for prioritizing attention and investments in communities with environmental justice concerns, offering valuable information for effective siting, permitting, and enforcement. However, there is a noted lack of publicly available federal resources or funding specifically dedicated to supporting the development, maintenance, and widespread adoption of these important environmental justice screening tools.

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### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE EXECUTIVE ORDER**

Governor Moore's executive order, "Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity (VOICE)," unifies Maryland's environmental justice efforts. Signed July 17th, 2025 VOICE promotes meaningful engagement with communities disproportionately affected by pollution, aiming for clean air, water, and resilient communities. The order mandates state agencies to increase resources for underrepresented farmers, reinforce environmental justice roles, designate environmental justice officers, and create a

biennial strategic plan. It also establishes the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council and requires using the MDEnviroScreen tool to address environmental injustice. Governor Wes Moore signed the "Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity (VOICE)" executive order to unify Maryland's environmental justice efforts, emphasizing that all Maryland residents deserve clean air, potable water, and robust communities for a competitive economy and a healthier state.

The executive order mandates several actions from state agencies:

- Increase resources for underserved agricultural producers.
- Fortify agency responsibilities regarding environmental justice.
- Appoint environmental justice officers.
- Disseminate biennial strategic plans with quantifiable metrics.
- Establish the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council to synchronize efforts, support local governments, and optimize funding in collaboration with the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities.
- Require the use of the MDEnviroScreen tool to address environmental injustice.

By integrating robust data, including demographic, health, and environmental impact information, Maryland can develop new EJ policies that effectively address the disproportionate risks faced by vulnerable communities. These communities, including low-income, disabled, elderly, and racial minorities, confront higher risks from climate change impacts. Data-driven policy development will ensure that while greenhouse gas emissions negatively affect these communities, climate change adaptation and mitigation can create more equitable benefits for all Marylanders. Maryland already demonstrates leadership in environmental justice, as seen in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act and the Maryland Commission on Climate Change's focus on climate justice, and the strategic use of data will further enhance these efforts. The CEJSC's eleven recommendations, informed by comprehensive data analysis, aim to create healthy, safe, economically vibrant, and environmentally sound communities.

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## **RECENT CEJSC ACTIONS**

### Environmental Justice Retreat

The 2025 CEJSC Retreat was designed as a working meeting with breakout groups focusing on three crucial topics: CEJSC Administrative, Community Engagement, and Partnerships and Planning. Commissioners discussed long-term structures (bylaws, voting), maximizing outreach, defining the mission, and identifying key partnerships.

# 2025 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CEJSC

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## **ADVISE STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ON EJ**

- CEJSC recommends the agencies represented on the Commission use MDEnviroScreen + Climate Vulnerability Score to flag projects in “overburdened/underserved” or “high vulnerability” census tracts for enhanced review, targeted mitigation, and robust community input.

The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) advocates for a systematic approach to project review and community engagement by all represented agencies. This approach includes integrating the MDEnviroScreen + Climate Vulnerability Score, and other state data sources into standard operating procedures to identify projects in "overburdened/underserved" or "high vulnerability" areas. For such projects, the CEJSC recommends that relevant agencies implement an enhanced review process that thoroughly assesses environmental impacts, health disparities, and socio-economic consequences from an environmental justice perspective. Furthermore, agencies should develop targeted mitigation strategies that reduce disproportionate burdens and promote equitable outcomes.

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## **ANALYZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAWS AND POLICIES TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF EJ AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

- State and local governments, in coordination with relevant groups, should develop guidance, resources, and examples to advance the new Sustainable Growth Policy and Equity Planning Principles, effective October 1, 2025, as mandated by 2025's [HB 286](#)

In coordination Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council, the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, and the Commission on Climate Change, develop guidance, resources, and examples (for both local and state agency use) to advance the new Sustainable Growth Policy and Equity Planning Principles per 2025's HB 286. Agency staff, in partnership with the CEJSC would establish, in this order, a list of programs, laws, and types of proposed legislation which the state and local governments can use to implement to advance the new Sustainable Growth Policy and Equity Planning Principles.

- CEJSC recommends commissioners coordinate with local governments on the adoption of existing Equity Principles or guidelines or resources.

CEJSC would form and convene subcommittees to discuss and develop needs for additional local and state agency guidance, which the subcommittees would then bring needs back to the CEJSC, the interagency Council, or other Commissions for advice. Once the CEJSC establishes priority needs, the subcommittees would lead work plans for addressing the needs, including the compilation of examples, model comprehensive planning language and analysis, and tutorials on how state and local governments could incorporate EJ and Equity data and resources into planning efforts and programs.

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**COORDINATE WITH OTHER COMMISSIONS ON THE ISSUES OF EJ AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.**

- Establishing a structured meeting cadence for Inter-Commission and Interagency Collaboration

By formalizing a comprehensive meeting calendar, CEJSC, CEHPAC and the Interagency Council can cultivate a more integrated and productive environment for inter-commission and interagency collaboration, ultimately leading to more effective policy development and program implementation. To foster robust collaboration and ensure efficient communication, it is crucial to establish a clearly defined and regularly scheduled calendar for joint meetings. This calendar should encompass all collaborative meetings involving various commissions and the interagency advisory council. The aim is to create a predictable rhythm for these interactions, allowing all stakeholders to plan effectively and contribute consistently.

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**RECOMMEND OPTIONS TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY; INCLUDE PRIORITIZED AREAS OF THE STATE THAT NEED IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.**

- CEJSC recommends commissioners coordinating with the Governor and General Assembly use the EnviroScreen and/or other state agency data as a standard when reviewing and analyzing existing laws and programs, as well as proposed legislation.

The Commission (CEJSC) strongly recommends that the General Assembly adopt a standardized approach when evaluating environmental policies. This approach could integrate data from the EnviroScreen tool, alongside other relevant state agency data. This comprehensive data-driven methodology is crucial for the thorough review and analysis of all existing laws and programs, as well as for the informed consideration of all

proposed legislation. By establishing such a standard, the CEJSC aims to ensure that environmental justice, public health, and equitable clean energy transitions are central to all future policy decisions.

- CEJSC recommends passage of legislation that aligns state environmental permitting with people's lived experience by giving MDE the authority to condition, modify, or deny certain types of permits (including new, expansion, and renewal) in areas of the state where there is a concentration of pollution, thereby acknowledging the impact of existing burdens in overburdened communities across the state.

The Moore-Miller Administration's Transition report included this recommendation (2023, p. 27) and the CEJSC has included similar recommendations for at least the last two years in a row. MDE's permitting process currently does not adequately consider existing pollution sources, health, or socioeconomic factors, even though the state of the science has demonstrated these indicators do influence community health and the community's ability to respond to the historical accumulation of pollution sources. Other states have passed and are passing sweeping environmental justice permitting legislation. The CEJSC received a thorough presentation from national expert and former Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Environmental Justice at the Environmental Protection Agency, Charles Lee, on this topic this year.

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#### **RECOMMEND OPTIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF MDE**

- CEJSC recommends commissioners coordinate with MDE To provide education and support to communities adversely impacted by environmental injustices

The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) strongly recommends that commissioners actively coordinate with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) in collaboration with the Commission to provide educational opportunities to communities adversely impacted by environmental injustices. This collaborative effort is crucial for developing and implementing targeted initiatives designed to provide comprehensive education and robust support to communities that have been historically and disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices. The CEJSC emphasizes that a unified approach is necessary to address the complex challenges faced by these communities, ensuring they have access to vital information, resources, and advocacy to mitigate the effects of environmental degradation and promote sustainable development.