



SB0121 - Zoning – Environmental Justice Considerations - Establishment

Presented to the Hon. Paul Pinsky and Members of the Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee
January 21, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to issue **a favorable report on SB0121 - Zoning – Environmental Justice Considerations**, sponsored by Senators Obie Patterson and Joanne Benson.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Reproductive freedom includes the right to sexual and reproductive healthcare, the right to have children or not, the right to experience the healthiest possible pregnancy and birth, and the right to raise children in a safe and healthy environment. The intersection between environmental justice and reproductive justice is evident when examining the effects of environmental pollutants on reproductive health outcomes. We support this bill which seeks to mitigate the adverse human health consequences associated with the establishment of landfill sites.

Landfill sites can contribute to air pollution and contaminate the surrounding groundwater and soil. The adverse human health outcomes associated with living near landfill sites as been widely studied in the U.S. for decades¹; reproductive health outcomes as a result of maternal exposure to landfill pollution include low birth weights, congenital anomalies (birth defects), neonatal fetal death, and preterm birth. Substantial research has shown that infants born with low birth weight and congenital anomalies² may be more at risk for many health problems; some may become sick in the first six days of life or develop infections, others can suffer from long term problems such as delayed motor skills and social development or learning disabilities³. These reproductive health outcomes have significant impacts on individuals, families, health-care systems, and societies. Furthermore, [landfills are disproportionately located in low-income and minority neighborhoods](#) and perpetuate the cycle of poverty and systemic racism.

We applaud this effort to require an environmental justice analysis before constructing or operating a landfill in an area zoned for residential use; the analyses should examine the area's demographic profile and the potential adverse environmental, human health, and economic impacts within the two-mile radius of the area, while also considering the cumulative environmental health impacts in relation to circumstances of the past, present, and foreseeable future. The attention to historical environmental injustice is a critical component of this bill. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0121**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Vrijheid, M. (2000). Health Effects of Residence Near Hazardous Waste Landfill Sites: A Review of Epidemiologic Literature. Environmental Health Perspectives, Vol I 08

² Congenital anomalies, World Health Organization, 2020. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/congenital-anomalies>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reproductive and Birth Outcomes and the Environment. Retrieved <https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showRbBirthOutcomeEnv>