

The Jewish Imperative to support  
The Healthy, Green Maryland Constitutional Amendment  
[HB 472](#) 2019

וּבְכָל אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזְתְּכֶם בְּאֵלֶּה תִּתְּנוּ לְאֶרֶץ:

In all the lands that you are privileged to hold,  
you must assure redemption of the land. (Lev 25:24)

Degraded environments hurt everyone. All of us and untold generations to come. But we know that as Jews we are charged with passing down the blessings of life from generation to generation. So we must do all we can to protect nature, ourselves, our neighbors and our children from the irreversible harms of polluted waters, unhealthy air, struggling ecosystems and a radically changing climate.

The [Healthy, Green Maryland Amendment](#) is expressly designed to do just that. It will enshrine in the State's Declaration of Rights (our State Bill of Rights) the right of all Marylanders to a healthy and healthful environment, now and tomorrow.

“Do not destroy anything!” is the first and most general call  
of God which comes to humanity. (Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*)

The amendment will ensure that we preserve and protect:

- clean air and healthy water, fulfilling the mitzvah of caring for the earth.
- healthy communities for all, fulfilling the mitzvah of loving our neighbors as ourselves.
- a healthy, sustainable, life-giving environment, fulfilling the mitzvah to promote a world in which all generations can live and flourish.

This amendment does this by giving you the right to a healthy and healthful environment; conferring on you standing so you can fight for your rights; confirming that the natural resources of the State are the common property of us all; and establishing the government of Maryland as a trustee of the state's natural resources for all of us.

We have the opportunity to become one a handful of states to adopt constitutional provisions that affirmatively codify our right to a liveable future whether in cities, rural areas or wilderness. To learn more or to invite a speaker to your synagogue, havurah or group to talk about the Healthy Green Amendment campaign, contact [field@mdehn.org](mailto:field@mdehn.org).



## **The Healthy, Green Maryland Constitutional Amendment**

If adopted, **The Healthy, Green Maryland Constitutional Amendment** would assert and protect your right to clean air, pure water, unpolluted land and an ecosystem that is able to renew itself for generations to come. Placed in the State's Declaration of Rights, this amendment would set environmental health – essential for you and all life - on equal footing with the other civil rights that are the bedrock of American democracy.

### **Why do we need a Healthy, Green Maryland Constitutional Amendment**

Surprisingly, your right to clean air, pure water and unpolluted land is not now protected by either the state or federal constitution. Any protections you currently have are established by laws and regulations which can readily be changed, ignored (as too many are) or otherwise overridden. A constitutional amendment would secure this right for you, give you “standing” to sue for your rights and require that the State and all its levels of government pursue policies that comply with the protections enumerated in this amendment.

### **The Healthy, Green Maryland Constitutional Amendment eliminates “sacrifice zones”**

This amendment reminds us all that there is no “away.” All our waste, power plants, incinerators go somewhere. And that somewhere is often in neighborhoods with little political clout. This amendment says that we must work to eliminate all sources of pollution, and in the meanwhile, protect everyone equally.

### **The Healthy, Green Maryland Constitutional Amendment supports wise development**

All life leaves traces on the earth. Our task, and the call of this amendment, is to break the coupling of progress-and-pollution and to build in its stead a society and economy that support life now and in the future.

### **Our constitution is a charter of our society's deepest values**

Beyond their legal ramifications, constitutions speak to the values that undergird societies. Currently, our Maryland constitution says nothing about the inestimable value of the environment and our dependence on it. This amendment enshrines in our constitution our belief that nature is the foundation of all life, that it is a gift for all generations whose abundant goodness must be equally accessible to all, and that we all have the obligation to preserve its health for ourselves, each other and generations to come.