

# The **REDUCE** Act: Reducing Environmental Degradation for the Underserved through **Community Engagement**

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Every Marylander has the right to breathe clean air and drink clean water. Communities and industry both benefit when community concerns are addressed early in the air pollution permit application process.

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The Reduce Act supports information sharing about diesel trucks to enhance community engagement in decisions about new industrial development. The goal is effective engagement between communities, industry, and government when new air pollution permits are being considered.

## In areas with high poverty or non-white populations, the permit applicant will:

- estimate and publish the number of diesel truck trips per day needed to service the facility and the associated emissions from the truck trips
- consult with the community about diesel truck trip routes and times, impacts on road infrastructure and traffic safety, and idling policies

## The Maryland Department of the Environment will:

- solicit from health departments any available information about the incidence of air pollution-related health disparities within the affected community and make this information available to community members

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The bill applies to 4 categories of air pollution permits to improve community engagement, transparency, and accountability between diverse stakeholders. It will not increase the time to complete a permit application or change MDE's criteria for permit approval.

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## Why focus on community engagement around diesel trucks in overburdened communities?

- People living near major roads experience a higher rate of low birth weight babies, asthma, cardiovascular disease
- In Maryland, a significant increased cancer risk from vehicles was identified, and is higher in census tracts with predominately African-American populations and low-income populations (Apelberg, 2005)
- Improvements in air pollution can contribute to a healthier lifespan by directly improving lung size and function in children (Gauderman, 2015)
- Social vulnerabilities – like poverty and racial discrimination – may exacerbate the effects of environmental exposures on health (Gee, 2004)
- Many communities in Maryland that are disproportionately exposed to environmental pollution also lack access to health-promoting infrastructure (Wilson, 2014)
- Community feedback during the permitting process can help identify alternate truck routes and other steps that improve community health at low or no cost to the applicant.