



*Forming Faithful Stewards,
Caring for Sacred Waters*

501 Sixth Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21403

**Testimony on Senate Bill 398
REDUCE Act**

**“Reducing Environmental Degradation for the Underserved through Community Engagement” Act
Position: Favorable**

February 15, 2016

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC) would like to express our strong support for the REDUCE Act. IPC is dedicated to educating, supporting and motivating people and communities of faith in the Chesapeake watershed to care for the Earth and all its inhabitants, beginning with their own home, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. We believe the REDUCE Act will be protective of both people and the environment.

The REDUCE legislation is designed to increase community engagement when new sources of air pollution are being sited in low income or minority communities. As CNN recently highlighted, “A report from the Center for Effective Government finds that people of color are almost twice as likely to live within one mile of our nation’s most dangerous industrial facilities compared with white residents. Poor residents are 1½ times more likely than nonpoor residents to live in these areas. Living so close to stockpiles of hazardous chemicals puts these residents in danger of a catastrophic disaster. It also pollutes their air, water and soil.” Clearly, our marginalized brothers and sisters are burdened with environmental pollution to a greater extent than those living in more affluent areas. The REDUCE bill would offer enhanced protections for these at-risk communities by requiring that information about increased truck traffic associated with the new site be shared with community members, so that mitigating arrangements such as rerouting can be considered.

Without question, vulnerable populations do not have the time, resources, or connections needed to stay abreast of permitting issues in their community - even when it will directly impact their lives and property values. Think of how hard it is to stay on top of emails and local news...imagine trying to do all that while simultaneously worrying about crime, drug use, unemployment, decent housing, and other immediate dangers in your own back yard.

Also, the REDUCE act calls for information about the relationship between health disparities and air pollution to be shared with communities, to the extent available. This continues the educational process of informing communities about how to protect themselves from the hazards of air pollution.

It seems appropriate to ask industry and government to go above and beyond to ensure that underserved and minority groups who could be impacted by newly permitted industrial operations be well-informed, as it is our duty to protect our brothers and sisters most in need.

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake urges your favorable action on the REDUCE Act. Thank you.

Jodi Rose, Executive Director