



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, April 28, 2024

### *Environmental Justice - PA HB652*

**Environmental Justice** has been defined 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” (PA Department of Environmental Protection - DEP). The DEP has identified 30 characteristics to identify an **Environmental Justice Area**. They include environmental factors such as air, water, and ground pollution, and population factors such as health status, race, and income.

#### **What is PA House Bill 652?**

PA HB652 will require any new facility or expansion of an existing facility that will have environmental impact in an Environmental Justice (EJ) area to:

- ☀ Provide an impact report on the effects of the proposed new or expanded facility on the EJ area, including those effects that cannot be avoided or eliminated.
- ☀ Present an EJ plan at a public hearing organized by the Department of Environmental Protection at a location convenient to interested parties.
- ☀ Allow the Dept of Environmental Protection to submit copies of the application to the clerk of the municipality in which the facility is located. The municipality may then recommend revisions or disapproval of the plan if it finds those impacts would further harm the health and environment of the community.

#### **Status of the Bill**

HB652 was passed by the Environmental Resources Committee, went to the House Floor, was amended on 6/6/23, and was sent back to the Rules Committee. Once the Rules Committee reviews the bill, it will go back to the House Floor. The House meets again in mid-September.

**“Our Environmental Justice communities deserve better than investments that only perpetuate the cycle of being exposed to hazardous conditions that potentially poison their water and air, impact their health, drive down their property values and prevent them from wanting to remain part of the community.... At a recent event in Harrisburg, Clean Water Action offered an alternative vision that calls for incentivizing sustainable and renewable energy companies to build in Environmental Justice communities - allowing for the creation of stable long-term jobs that also uplifts community conditions.”** (Steve Hvozdoich, *Clean Water Action*, 4/19/24)

#### **Take Action**

Lobby the head of the Rules Committee, Rep. Matthew Bradford, to prioritize HB652 at <https://www.pahouse.com/Bradford/Contact>. You can also [contact Gov. Shapiro and House leadership and urge them to get behind HB652](#) and create meaningful avenues that will help alleviate some of the unjust and disproportionate environmental burdens environmental communities face.

Information in this column was shared by Barbara Sheehan from Our Mother of Consolation (OMC) Parish's Laudato Si' Circle. Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).