



The State of Maryland

Executive Department

EXECUTIVE ORDER

01.01.2025.17

Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity (VOICE)

- WHEREAS, For over 25 years, Maryland has formally recognized and addressed Environmental Justice issues within its governance, policies, and community development strategies;
- WHEREAS, The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, 2022 Md. Laws Ch. 38, defines Environmental Justice as equal protection from environmental and public health hazards for all people regardless of race, income, culture, and social status;
- WHEREAS, Maryland is a national leader in addressing climate change, promoting sustainability, and building community resilience with a particular focus on supporting overburdened, coastal, tribal, and rural communities;
- WHEREAS, Maryland has demonstrated a fundamental commitment to prosperity and opportunity for all, including by advancing laws, regulations, policies and priority actions that advance Environmental Justice and equal protections of all Marylanders;
- WHEREAS, The Maryland Department of Environment created an Office of Environmental Justice that developed Maryland's Environmental Justice mapping tool to examine environmental and health impacts on overburdened, coastal, urban, tribal and rural Maryland communities;
- WHEREAS, Maryland's Department of Natural Resources, with support from its Environmental Justice Officer, implements numerous programs that advance Environmental Justice including the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, that provides grant funding for outdoor recreation and park projects that help Marylanders overcome many social, geographic, cultural, physical, and economic barriers to access or enjoyment outdoors;

- WHEREAS, Maryland's Department of Agriculture implements numerous programs that advance urban agriculture, reduce food insecurity, promote the benefits of and access to fresh produce, and expand agricultural literacy to make resources available to new farmers and farmers from traditionally and historically underrepresented communities;
- WHEREAS, The Maryland Department of Health, through the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, works to reduce health disparities and to advance health equity, by leveraging the resources of the Department to support community health and well-being, improve health outcomes, and foster robust community public/private partnerships;
- WHEREAS, Pursuant to the 2024 Just Communities Act, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development has developed a state-wide geographic data layer to identify census tracts that have borne the brunt of Maryland's legacy inequalities including redlining, segregation and disproportionate exposure to environmental and health hazards;
- WHEREAS, The Maryland Department of Transportation administers programs, policies, and initiatives that align and promote Environmental Justice, including the Urban Tree Grants program that provides funding to support tree planting in communities that have lost trees as part of a transportation facility projects, prioritizing replacement of trees in communities affected by Environmental Justice issues or heat island effects;
- WHEREAS, The Maryland Energy Administration administers the Strategic Energy Investment Fund, providing grants, rebates, loans, and technical assistance across a portfolio of program and policy initiatives, including those to support energy efficiency and rooftop solar projects that benefit overburdened communities;
- WHEREAS, The Maryland Department of Human Services, through the Office of Home Energy Programs provides bill assistance to low-income households in the State of Maryland to make their energy costs more affordable;
- WHEREAS, The Maryland Department of Emergency Management, through the Office of Resilience, works to ensure that resilience investments prioritize vulnerable communities;

WHEREAS, State agencies within the Moore-Miller Administration can and should take additional actions to embed explicit analysis of equity considerations in policies and practices, including by analyzing demographic and geographic gaps in outcomes and access to funding and services, and reviewing community engagement strategies with a focus on Marylanders who reside in communities that have historically been overburdened and marginalized including coastal, rural, tribal and urban populations;

WHEREAS, Data-driven goals and indicators are vital for State agencies to measure opportunities and outcomes for all communities and to support public engagement and accountability in an efficient, effective, secure, and responsible manner; and

WHEREAS, State agencies can benefit from having access to expertise, data tools, methodologies, and practices as they review programs and policies to achieve more equitable outcomes.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WES MOORE, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME BY THE CONSTITUTION AND LAWS OF MARYLAND, PROCLAIM THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE ORDER, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY:

A. Definitions.

1. "State Agency" means a department, agency, commission, board, council, or other body of State government subject to the direction and supervision of the Governor.
2. "Overburdened Community" has the meaning provided in §1-701(a)(7) of the Environment Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

B. Unified Approach to Environmental Justice.

1. To ensure consistent, equitable, and fair distribution of State resources, all State Agencies that are Members of the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council, established by Section C, below, shall use the Environmental Justice Mapping Tool, created by the Department of the Environment, to track and address disparities related to environmental hazards, exposures, risks, health outcomes, investments, and benefits.

2. State Agencies shall prioritize opportunities for meaningful engagement with impacted communities on policies and priorities related to Environmental Justice and that enable these communities to meaningfully inform State Agency decision-making.
3. State Agencies shall identify and implement mechanisms to increase resources and opportunities for historically underrepresented farmers, rural and urban, by reducing barriers for entry, such as land access, and financing.

C. Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council (Council).

1. **Establishment.** There is hereby established the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council (Council).
2. **Membership.** The members of the Council are appointed by the Governor, in collaboration with the Secretary of the Environment, and shall consist of the Chief Sustainability Officer and leader representatives from the following State agencies:
 - i. Department of Natural Resources;
 - ii. Department of Transportation;
 - iii. Maryland Port Authority;
 - iv. Department of Agriculture;
 - v. Department of Housing and Community Development;
 - vi. Department of Health;
 - vii. Department of Planning;
 - viii. Maryland Energy Administration;
 - ix. Department of Commerce;
 - x. Department of Emergency Management;
 - xi. Governor's Office for Children;
 - xii. Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services;
 - xiii. Department of Budget and Management; and
 - xiv. Other officials of State Agencies as the Governor or Secretary of the Environment may from time to time designate.
3. **Chair.** The Deputy Secretary of the Environment shall serve as Chair of the Council, and the Assistant Secretary of the Environment shall serve as Vice Chair of the Council.

4. **Duties.** The Council shall:
- i. Support and facilitate interagency collaboration on programs and activities related to environmental justice, including the development of training plans to build the capacity and understanding of employees to advance environmental justice and to increase the meaningful participation of communities with environmental justice concerns;
 - ii. Identify and leverage State and federal resources to develop and implement outreach adaptation and mitigation strategies that improve environmental health outcomes, particularly for overburdened coastal, rural, tribal and urban communities;
 - iii. Develop strategies across State Agencies to stack federal grant opportunities, utilizing and leveraging multiple funding sources in parallel, to maximize investments and benefits for overburdened and rural communities;
 - iv. Identify strategies to expedite and streamline the delivery of State and federal funding to overburdened and rural communities that lack existing resources to utilize a reimbursable grant funding framework and provide technical assistance;
 - v. Within each member agency of the Council, designate an Environmental Justice Officer responsible for leading agency planning and implementation of the agency's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, in a manner that seeks to reflect the rich diversity of Maryland;
 - vi. Engage, collaborate, and consult with policy and community experts on Environmental Justice to conduct analyses and develop tools, including by building on and collaborating with existing bodies, as appropriate such as the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC), the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC), the Maryland Commission on Climate Change, the Governor's

Subcabinet on Climate, the Sustainable Growth Subcabinet and the Chesapeake Bay Cabinet;

- vii. Engage, collaborate, and consult with impacted communities on programs and activities related to environmental justice; including to receive their input on the development of the Environmental Justice Strategic Plans;
- viii. Track the overall spending of State and federal capital that has benefited overburdened and disadvantaged communities;
- ix. Assess the efficiency and accessibility of conservation programs and other resources for farmers and watermen in overburdened and underrepresented communities and develop strategies to address barriers;
- x. Develop an enhanced public participation plan for communities with Environmental Justice concerns potentially affected by certain resource extraction, waste management, industrial and manufacturing processes and activities;
- xi. Assist local governments in ensuring that all residents, regardless of their background, have equitable access to a healthy environment by:
 - a. Upon request, providing technical assistance to local government entities, including incorporated and unincorporated municipalities, urban, suburban rural counties and coastal areas, which can include guidance on developing and implementing environmental justice programs, conducting impact assessments with an equity lens, identifying funding opportunities, and navigating complex regulatory frameworks; and
 - b. Encouraging and supporting the formation and implementation of local environmental justice initiatives by developing model plans and policies, hosting workshops and trainings, and facilitating

partnerships between community based organizations and academic institutions;

- xii. Identify and make recommendations to the Governor to address potential disproportionate environmental and health impacts that State laws, regulations, policies, and activities may have on Maryland residents and ensure the benefits are shared equitably; and
- xiii. Make recommendations to the Governor to ensure consistency with federal Environmental Justice programs.

5. Meetings.

- i. The Council shall meet at least quarterly.
- ii. In coordination with the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC), the Council shall hold at least two public meetings per year. Those public meetings shall include representatives from impacted communities.
- iii. The Council shall be staffed by the Department of the Environment.

6. Guidance.

- i. Within 6 months of the date of this Order, the Chair shall issue guidance, in consultation with the CEJSC, to inform State Agencies of the implementation of this order.
- ii. The Chair may revise or issue additional guidance under this Order, as appropriate, and shall consider any additional recommendations made by the CEJSC in issuing or revising guidance.

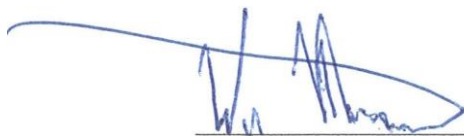
- 7. Reporting.** The Council, led by the Department of the Environment, shall submit a report to the Governor's Chief Sustainability Officer on or before December 1, 2025, and annually by December 1st each year thereafter, detailing the progress of implementing this Order. The Council's annual reports shall be made available to the public.

8. **Environmental Justice Strategic Plans.** No later than 12 months after the date of this order and every 2 years thereafter, each agency member of the Council shall submit to the Chair and make available to the public, online, an Environmental Justice Strategic Plan with metrics to promote Environmental Justice in ways tailored to the specific agency and its authority, mission, and programs. Agencies must seek guidance from impacted stakeholders in the development of the metrics.

D. General Provisions.

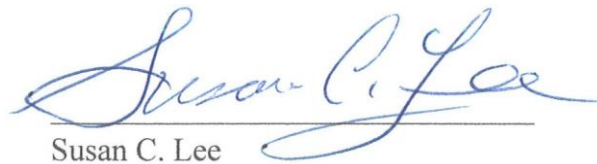
1. This Executive Order shall be implemented in a manner that is consistent with all applicable statutes and regulations. Nothing in this Executive Order shall operate to contravene any State or federal law or to affect the State's receipt of federal funding.
2. If any provision of this Executive Order or its application to any person, entity, or circumstance is held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, all other provisions or applications of the Executive Order shall remain in effect to the extent possible without the invalid provision or application. To achieve this purpose, the provisions of this Executive Order are severable.

GIVEN Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland, in the City of Baltimore, this 17th Day of July, 2025.



Wes Moore
Governor

ATTEST:



Susan C. Lee
Secretary of State

