

Senate President Karen Spilka
State House, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
State House, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

July 27, 2020

Dear President Spilka and Speaker DeLeo:

As a diverse group of city and town elected officials representing hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts residents, we write in support of environmental justice (EJ) legislation for our communities -- specifically H. 4264, S. 464, and S. 453. We thank the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Committee for reporting these bills favorably to the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees back in December 2019.

These environmental justice bills are a necessary resolution to decades of disparate environmental impacts on low-income, English-isolated communities, and communities of color in Massachusetts. Inequalities in the Commonwealth continue to worsen--our zip code often influences how clean our air is, how much open space we have access to, and generally how healthy our communities are. Too often trash burning incinerators, landfills, and polluting power plants are placed in low-income and communities of color without enough transparency and a lack of resident engagement in decision-making processes. We can and must do better.

The legislation we are supporting will:

1. **PROTECT COMMUNITIES FROM MORE POLLUTION** by expanding the requirements for state environmental review to include the potential for equitable outcomes when deciding whether to prohibit polluting projects and approve benefits, such as expanded green space and resources. The legislation would add a definition of EJ population to state law.
2. **REDUCE PUBLIC HEALTH INEQUITIES IN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES** by requiring identification of adverse short- and long-term health consequences of a proposed project and measures to minimize public health damage. The Act further requires analysis of cumulative impact and effects of climate change on EJ populations.
3. **INCREASE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT AND INFORMATION** by asking polluters to pay for translation of written information into languages spoken by nearby residents and interpretation at public meetings so that everyone can learn about a project and share their opinion with decision makers. The Act also requires public meetings to be held in convenient locations at times when people are able to attend.

All people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution, to live and work in a healthy environment, and to enjoy parks and nature. The communities we represent can't wait any longer for protections, especially during this public health crisis we all face.

We look forward to working with you to address environmental justice this session. We appreciate your time and consideration.

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