

Legislation Text

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Calling on the Pennsylvania General Assembly to adopt House Bills 2034 and 2043, House Resolution 151, Senate Resolution 201, and Senate Bill 189 and thanking Governor Tom Wolf, Representative Donna Bullock, Representative Malcolm Kenyatta, Representative Chris Rabb, and Senator Vincent Hughes for their commitment to addressing Environmental Justice in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, Thirty years ago, delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit drafted and adopted the 17 principles of Environmental Justice, which continue to guide the movement for Environmental Justice; and

WHEREAS, The Environmental Justice movement has been championed by Black, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native Americans to combat the systemic environmental racism that exists in America and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS Environmental Justice advocates have fought tirelessly for decades to protect their communities from toxic and polluting facilities and their work has led directly to these landmark actions; and

WHEREAS, Environmental racism is well-documented with peer-reviewed studies finding a wide range of disparate impacts of pollution on communities of color and low-income communities; and

WHEREAS, Frontline communities, or communities surrounding industrial areas, are disproportionately communities of color, low-income communities, and areas that lack access to healthy food. Additionally, research has found these communities have high cancer risks and respiratory hazards; and

WHEREAS, These environmental impacts have led to significant health disparities for people of color, including higher rates of asthma, as well as premature, underweight, and stillborn births, and now higher rates of Covid-19 mortality; and

WHEREAS, The impacts of climate change will disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities, especially through hotter temperatures and more extreme weather; and

WHEREAS, Representatives Bullock, Kenyatta, and Rabb and Senator Hughes recognize the crucial need to ensure that a more transparent and protective permitting process for overburdened communities; and

WHEREAS, Representatives Bullock, Kenyatta, and Rabb introduced House Bill 2043, which would give the Department of Environmental Protection the ability to deny applications if it finds the cumulative impacts of a facility on an already burdened community are too great; and

WHEREAS, Senator Hughes introduced Senate Bill 189 to expand and codify the Office of Environmental Justice within the Department of Environmental Protection to ensure that identifying, addressing the disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of programs, policies and activities of the department have on communities of color and low-income communities is a top priority; and

WHEREAS, Centering the work of advocates, especially people of color who have disproportionately experienced Environmental Racism, is crucial to creating a just and thriving Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Representatives Donna Bullock, Malcolm Kenyatta, and Chris Rabb have introduced House Resolution 151 and Senator Hughes has introduced Senate Resolution 201, which recognizes the 30th Anniversary of the adoption of the 17 principles of Environmental Justice that were presented to delegates at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit; and

WHEREAS, Taking a whole government approach to addressing Environmental Justice is crucial to remedying the significant disparities in health and safety and ensuring they do not continue into the future; and

WHEREAS, Governor Wolf signed Executive Order 2021-07, which permanently establishes the Office of Environmental Justice and formally establishes the Environmental Justice Advisory Board and Environmental Justice Interagency Council, on Thursday, October 28, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Representatives Donna Bullock, Malcolm Kenyatta, and Chris Rabb and Senator Vincent Hughes have introduced House Bills 2034 and Senate Bill 189 which will codify the Office of Environmental Justice and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board, ensuring their permanent existence as part of state government; and

WHEREAS, Combined these initiatives will make a significant step toward improving community health, addressing systemic racism, and protecting our natural environments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby call on the Pennsylvania General Assembly to adopt House Bills 2034 and 2043, House Resolution 151, Senate Resolution 201, and Senate Bill 189 and thank Governor Tom Wolf, Representative Donna Bullock, Representative Malcolm Kenyatta, Representative Chris Rabb, and Senator Vincent Hughes for their commitment to addressing Environmental Justice in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.