Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC)
&
Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC)

Thursday, September 23, 2025
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (EST)

__MINUTES__

Members:
Subha Chandar (Chair)
Alicia Mezu
Ben Gitterman
Camille Burke
Frederick Banks (Vice Chair)
Megan Weil Latshaw
Alexander Lehmann

Paul Ferraro
Nse Witherspoon
Matthew McConaughey
Kylan Simpson (staff)

Welcome

- The meeting was opened by CEJSC Chair Camille Burke and CEHPAC Chair Subha Chandar.
- Introductions were made, including participation from state agency representatives, legislators, and community members.
- Quorum was discussed; CEHPAC initially did not have quorum to approve minutes, but later achieved quorum for approval.

Old Business

Approval of July 8, 2025 Minutes (CEHPAC)

- Quorum confirmed later in meeting.
- Minutes approved with amendment to include the letter to Montgomery County Public Schools and the superintendent's response.

New Business

1. Briefing on Executive Order on Environmental Justice

- Nevan Edwards (MDE) summarized the new Executive Order, emphasizing Maryland's commitment to integrating environmental justice into agency decision-making.
- Focus on data-driven solutions including the MD EnviroScreen tool.
- Clarified distinction between:
    - Interagency EJ & Equity Advisory Council (statewide strategy)
    - CEJSC (critical issue identification and recommendations).
- Questions raised on:

- o Council membership overlaps.
- o Resource allocation for compliance.
- o How CEHPAC/CEJSC may engage with Advisory Council.
- Adam Ortiz (MDE) noted first Advisory Council meeting will occur within four weeks.
- Dr. Sacoby Wilson stressed importance of dedicated resources; otherwise the EO risks being symbolic.

2. MDEnviroScreen Tool

- Noble Smith (MDE) presented overview: EJ score aggregates pollution burden, environmental effects, and sensitive populations.
- Alex Lima (MDE) announced public webinars, including interest in Spanish-language sessions.
- Dr. Wilson asked about data availability and rollout engagement with Latinx organizations.
- Community engagement emphasized (outreach to Brandywine, Eastern Shore, etc.).
- Requests: downloadable data, newsletter/social media graphics, and presentations for local health officers.
- Matthew McConaughey (WICHD) agreed to coordinate sharing with county health officers.

3. Environmental Health Data Sources

- Subha Chandar (MDH) highlighted integration of health data (e.g., asthma, low birth weight) into EnviroScreen.
- Mentioned Maryland Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (CDC-funded).
- State dashboards expanding into overdose, biosurveillance, firearm violence, etc.
- Discussion on:
  - o Outbreak investigations (e.g., measles) – efforts underway to integrate into biosurveillance.
  - o Need for an integrated one-stop platform.
  - o Incorporation of race/health proxies into tools to better visualize inequities.
- Community feedback: Tools must be understandable and actionable for impacted communities (example: Lothian asthma rates).
- Joseph Griffiths (MDP) suggested dedicating agenda time to topical data deep dives at future meetings.

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4. Briefing on Justice40 / GHG Reduction Spending

- Noble Smith (MDE) introduced Christopher Beck (MDE).
- Justice40 overview: 40% of federal climate funding should benefit disadvantaged communities.
- Maryland Climate Solutions Now Act requires annual study of GHG reduction spending.
- Challenges: state agencies do not consistently track GHG spending.
- Partnership with DBM to improve reporting by December.
- Discussion:
  - o Co-pollutants and health outcomes (asthma, respiratory illness).
  - o Visualizing GHG emissions and reductions via mapping.
  - o Dissemination of findings using infographics for multiple audiences.
  - o Plastics and chronic health concerns raised by Nse Witherspoon.

Public Comment

- Several participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that technical information (such as EnviroScreen scores, greenhouse gas reports, and health indicators) is translated into plain language

and actionable resources for communities. Tracy Garrett specifically raised concerns about high asthma rates among children in Lothian and the direct impact on school performance, urging that data tools be presented in ways that help families advocate for solutions.

- Community members reiterated the need for the Executive Order on Environmental Justice to be backed by adequate resources. Without clear commitments, they expressed concern that implementation could be symbolic rather than transformative. Calls were made for agencies to not only adopt EJ metrics but also to engage directly with the lived experiences of residents in disproportionately impacted communities.
- Speakers aligned with the Baltimore Just Transition Network highlighted the need for strong accountability mechanisms for Justice40 implementation. Recommendations included:
  - Ensuring at least 40% of climate funding reaches disproportionately affected communities by 2026.
  - Providing regular, accessible briefings to impacted communities on how funds are distributed.
  - Building transparency into both the rollout of the EnviroScreen tool and the Executive Order.
- Concerns were raised by Veronika Carella on the lack of detailed, publicly available data about the use of hazardous pesticides and fertilizers near schools and homes. Community members stressed that this gap undermines the human right to safe drinking water. The issue of PFAS contamination was highlighted with a case example of a Maryland school forced to rely on bottled water due to pesticide-related PFAS exposure. Calls were made for MDA and other agencies to provide clearer, accessible reporting on chemical applications and their potential health impacts.
- Additional testimony urged both commissions to consider plastics and fossil fuel impacts on chronic health conditions, and to ensure that co-pollutants (not just GHGs) are factored into analysis and reporting.

Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM.

- C. Burke to share Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week schedule.
- Adam Ortiz to clarify agency representation on CEJSC/Advisory Council.
- Future joint meetings to include topical data discussions with an EJ + children's health angle.
- Noble Smith to share GHG reduction spending study and reshare MDA recording.
- Invite MDA representative to address hazardous chemical concerns at next meeting

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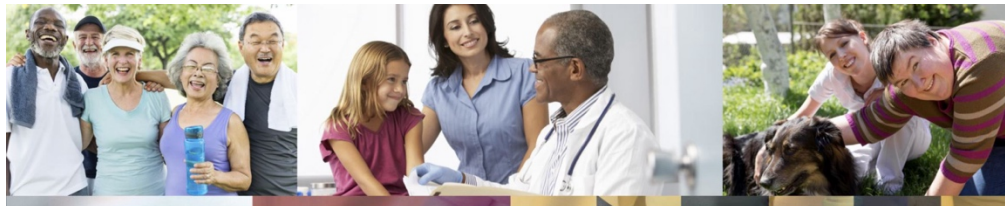
MDH Environmental Health Data

Joint Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council and Commission for Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities Meeting September 23, 2025

Subha Chandar, MPH - CEHPAC Chair, MDH Environmental Health Bureau
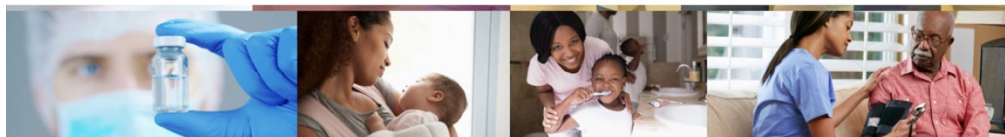
Mission and Vision

Mission

The mission of the Prevention and Health Promotion Administration is to protect, promote and improve the health and well-being of all Marylanders.

Vision

The Prevention and Health Promotion Administration envisions a future in which all Marylanders have equitable opportunities to live, thrive, and be healthy.

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National Tracking Network

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

- National Tracking Program: https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/

- Strategies
  - Surveillance
  - Information Technology
  - Partnerships
  - Outreach and Communication
  - Program Capacity

Maryland Environmental Public Health Data Portal

- MD Data Portal vs. National EPHT Data Portal
  - CDC is more restrictive about records with missing information
  - Data is submitted to CDC annually, while the MD portal may be updated more frequently

- Maryland Data Portal
  - Maps and tables with most recently available county or census tract rates, counts, or percentages
  - Statewide and county trendlines
  - Nationally Consistent Data and Measures (NCDMs)
  - Most data available as a downloadable table (.csv)
  - Data portal website is mobile and tablet-friendly

- Certain topics have unique displays
  - Air quality - modeled data
  - Birth defects - statewide data only

Maryland Data Portal

- Data sources include
  - Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC, hospital billing data)
  - MD Department of the Environment (MDE)
  - MD Cancer Registry (MCR)
  - MD Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)
  - MD Birth Defects Reporting and Information System (BDRIS)
 - MD Vital Statistics

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Maryland Data Portal Topics

- Health Topics
  - Asthma*
  - Birth Defects
  - Birth Outcomes
  - Cancer (14 types and All Cause Cancer)*
  - Childhood Lead Poisoning*
  - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD)
  - Falls
  - Heart Attack
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Unintentional Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Environmental Topics
  - Air Quality
  - Climate Change
  - Drinking Water

* = Census tract-level data is available

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Accessing the Data Portal
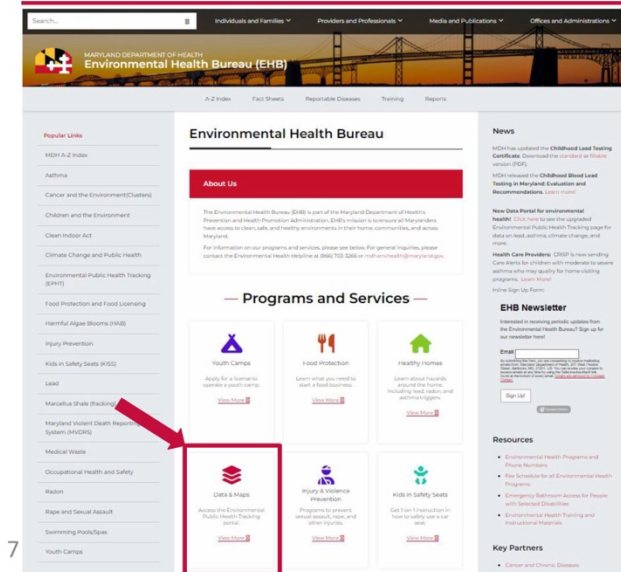
Environmental Health Bureau (EHB) Website:
https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/Pages/Environmental.aspx

EHB Data and Maps:
https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OEHFP/EH/tracking/Pages/Home.aspx

EHB Data Portal:
https://maps.health.maryland.gov/ephtportal/

Portal User Guide PDF

Maryland Tracking Website

Data Portal Landing Page

MDH Data Office - New Dashboards
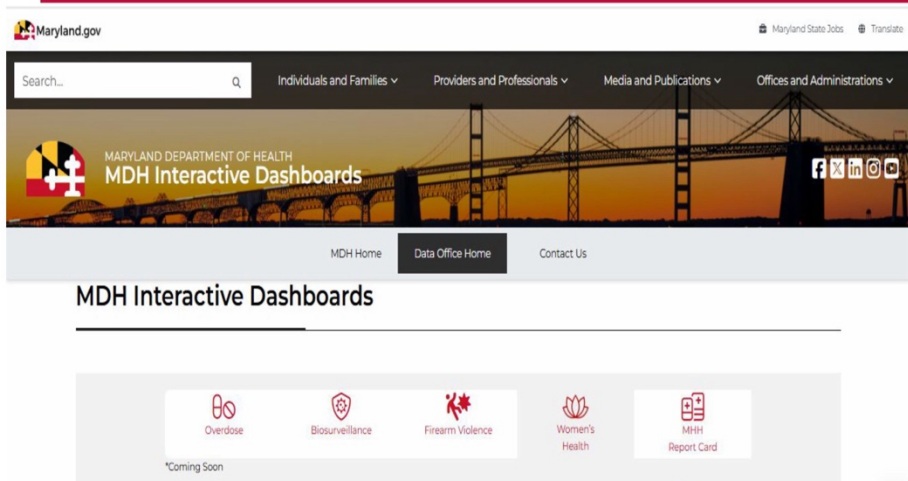
Data Portal and Dashboard Links

- Data Portal
  - https://maps.health.maryland.gov/ephtportal/
- Data Dashboards
  - https://health.maryland.gov/dataoffice/Pages/mdh-dashboards.aspx

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Questions

Thank you!

Subha Chandar, MPH

Deputy Director, Environmental Health Bureau

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Prevention and Health Promotion Administration

https://phpa.health.Maryland.gov