



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400  
Providence, RI 02903  
Phone: (401) 831-7171  
Fax: (401) 831-7175  
[www.riaclu.org](http://www.riaclu.org)  
[info@riaclu.org](mailto:info@riaclu.org)

**ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT**

**TESTIMONY ON 21 – H 6383,  
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT –  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT  
June 7, 2021**

The ACLU of RI appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this legislation which would center environmental justice in the construction of a variety of facilities. As an inextricable component of racial justice, environmental justice is critical to confronting issues of health, economic, and education equity in Rhode Island.

Disproportionately, BIPOC communities nationwide are exposed to pollutants which threaten the health of residents. A legacy of racism and weak enforcement of zoning has routinely placed “factories, refineries, landfills and factory farms in Black, brown and poor communities, exposing their residents to far greater health risks from pollution than those in whiter, more affluent areas.”<sup>1</sup> Importantly, this legislation prioritizes community input regarding the construction of any new facilities in a designated environmental justice zone, ensuring that public commentary is central to such zoning and permitting decisions.

In short, we appreciate the attention being paid by this legislation to the inherent racial and economic justice implications that accompany the building of such facilities. A statutory framework for ensuring environmental justice is an important step in addressing this often-ignored civil rights issue. We therefore support passage of this important bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Submitted by: Hannah Stern, Policy Associate

---

<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Hersher, *Hope and Skepticism as Biden Promises to Address Environmental Racism*, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/29/956012329/hope-and-skepticism-as-biden-promises-to-address-environmental-racism>