



Testimony offered on behalf of:
THE GARRETT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FAVORABLE:
SB 618 – Natural Resources - State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund - Mandatory Funding

Budget & Taxation Committee
February 24, 2021

On behalf of the Garrett County Chamber of Commerce, representing 600 member organizations in Western Maryland, I write to express our support of **SB 618 – Natural Resources - State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund - Mandatory Funding**.

SB 618 will provide an annual allocation of \$3 million dollars beginning in FY2023 to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund (SLPRPF) allowing DNR and MDE to develop a proper project prioritization system and the necessary funding to sufficiently address harmful and destructive issues impacting the 16 state-owned lakes in Maryland.

Deep Creek Lake in Garrett County, the largest freshwater lake and inland body of water in Maryland, is an economic engine, helping to generate an economic impact of \$360.5 million annually. The property tax revenue derived from the Deep Creek Lake watershed accounts for nearly 60% of County revenue. Deep Creek Lake is now 96 years old and as happens with any man-made lake, it is experiencing issues with aquatic invasive species (AIS), sediment accumulation, shoreline erosion and threats to water quality and conditions. The State, as the owner of Deep Creek Lake and 15 other lakes throughout Maryland, must allocate sufficient funding for protection programs, restoration and remediation projects to sustain these important natural resources for future generations.

During the 2018 session of the General Assembly, the Legislature approved the annual allocation of \$1 million to the SLPRPF through FY21. This amount is grossly inadequate for the State to uphold its responsibilities to all 16 lakes. As an example, it costs DNR \$215,000 annually for treatment of hydrilla just in Deep Creek Lake. Hydrilla is an AIS that is highly threatening to a lake and extensive treatment is needed to prevent the AIS from taking over a lake and rendering it useless. The \$3 million proposed in SB 618 is necessary for the State to uphold its responsibilities.

Please support Maryland's natural assets with a **FAVORABLE committee report on SB 618**.

Sincerely,

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