



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB449– Public Information Act – Revisions (Equitable Access to Records Act)

February 23, 2021
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB449** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland’s Eastern Shore with 3,500 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

SB449 will improve access to public records, enhancing agency accountability and transparency, which ShoreRivers believes will lead to greater enforcement of environmental laws and ultimately a healthier environment and local waterways.

ShoreRivers routinely submits Public Information Act Requests (PIAs) to seek information pertaining to permitting, enforcement, or rule making. Transparency of this information allows citizens and organizations like ShoreRivers to provide more-informed public involvement and comments in decision-making processes, which is required and encouraged through agency determinations of regulations, standards, plans, permits, or programs. Currently, our PIA requests are often unanswered or not answered on a timely manner and we have experienced inconsistencies between agencies during the process. SB449 would identify and address these inconsistencies, reducing some of the challenges the public faces in the PIA process.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB449**.

Sincerely,

Elle Bassett
Miles-Wye Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
Elle Bassett, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

Main Office
114 S. Washington St.
Suite 301
Easton, MD 21601
443.385.0511

Regional Office
111A North Main St.
Galena, MD 21635
410.810.7556

Regional Office
207 S. Water St.
Unit B
Chestertown, MD 21620
410.810.7556

shorerivers.org