

Testimony of
Anne Lewis, FAIA
President, City Wildlife, Inc.
in support of the
Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2021 - HB 0236
MD General Assembly
Wednesday, March 31, 2021

City Wildlife is pleased to have this opportunity to support passage of the Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2021. As a non-profit organization in the District of Columbia, our mission is to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat in our region. We run the District's *Lights Out DC* program, which documents bird/glass collisions in downtown DC. **Since 2010, our volunteers have documented more than 3,700 bird strikes in a small downtown area, 84% of which were fatal.** After picking up the dead birds, we then photograph them and donate their carcasses to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center for research. **Our goal is to prevent these fatal collisions and save birds' lives.**



Part of an annual bird collision count
City Wildlife, Inc.
Washington, DC

The birds we find are overwhelming neo-tropical migrants -- beautiful birds -- many of whose populations are in serious decline. Bird/glass collisions are one of the most significant sources of fatality for these valued and dwindling species. **Nationally, up to one billion birds are killed each year by colliding with glass.**

These strikes take a human toll, too. Two years ago at a DC elementary school, 53 Cedar Waxwings collided with glass along a corridor over a period of several days during their spring migration. The teachers said the children were so traumatized that they had to be kept away

from the corridor because it upset them too much to see the birds hitting the glass and dying on the ground. Many adults, too, have described how disturbing it is to see a bird hit a window -- an all-too-common experience that can disrupt a work environment.

The techniques to prevent these collisions are now well-known. There are simple and effective means of reducing bird/glass collisions through design, and -- especially if included during the initial construction phase -- need not add any additional cost to the project.

Many jurisdictions have now passed laws or resolutions mandating bird-safe design, including New York City, San Francisco, Portland, Toronto, and others. The District of Columbia's Department of Energy and Environment has addressed this problem by adding two optional bird-safe building credits to its Green Construction Code. These credits are based on the LEED Pilot Credit 55 and will apply to all construction covered by the Green Construction Code. These credits have been widely supported in our community.

In 2016, one of DC's problem buildings, the Washington Convention Center, installed bird-safe film at its L Street glass overpass, a feature that was killing many birds. The results have been dramatic: to date, we have seen an 85% reduction in bird strikes at this overpass. What's more, the film is nearly invisible.

In addition to reducing collisions, the lighting reductions that are part of all bird-safe standards can significantly reduce energy costs. The DC Court of Appeals, which now dims its atrium lights during migratory seasons, has reduced its atrium lighting costs by 15%. And the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building now dims its atrium lights at night all year, for a lighting cost reduction of 28%. Energy reduction will be influenced by the efficiency of the current light fixtures: the more inefficient the existing fixture, the greater the energy reduction by dimming. But even with efficient fixtures such as the those at the DC Court of Appeals, the savings can be substantial even if the lights are only dimmed four months a year. **Many buildings will find that dimming the lights all year can produce substantial savings with no loss of safety or functionality.**

We are thrilled that Maryland is considering this legislation and strongly support its passage. Establishing requirements for state owned or operated buildings will be highly effective, setting an important and highly visible standard for private construction to follow.

I am pleased to have been able to write in support of this legislation would be glad to provide any information that might be helpful about our bird-collision data or experiences.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Lewis, FAIA
President, City Wildlife, Inc.
anne.lewis@citywildlife.org