



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0062 – Land Use – Public Service Companies – Pollinator-Friendly Vegetation Management

January 30, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT of SB0062** 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.

This bill prohibits local jurisdictions from penalizing public service companies for installing and maintaining pollinator habitats within their area of operations. At a time when available habitat for pollinators is decreasing every day, Maryland needs to provide as many incentives and protections as possible for homeowners, utility companies, and state agencies who prioritize this critical habitat restoration. These habitat areas also provide a major benefit to local water quality by reducing erosion, trapping sediment and nutrients from entering our waterways, and cooling rainfall before it enters local creeks and streams. Recent studies have shown that 54% of the lower-48 states have been developed and 41% is in agricultural use, leaving only 5% of the country as undisturbed “natural” areas. With thousands of species at risk of extinction within the next few decades due to habitat loss and fragmentation, Marylanders need to protect and restore as much land as possible and should not be penalized for trying to do the right thing.

The Sierra Club has submitted text amendments to this bill that remove the section on naturalized plants, as well as providing more detail about integrated vegetation management, invasive plants, and the use of control measures. Naturalized plants, including Queen Anne’s Lace and red clover, should not be protected through this legislation because while they are not invasive, they provide almost no real benefit to water quality or habitat value. At a time when restoration is so critical, we cannot afford to take baby steps and protect species that don’t need to be protected. The other proposed language in these text amendments makes the process easier to implement and provides a clearer picture of the benefits this bill will provide.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on SB0062.

Sincerely,

Zack Kelleher,
Sassafras Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

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