

Committee: Environment & Transportation

Testimony on: HB 602 - Environment – State Wetlands – Shoreline Restoration

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 22, 2023

Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee,

The organizations and individuals listed below respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 602, which curbs the continued widespread use of armored shorelines and clarifies existing law by directing the installation of shorelines that increase the resilience of the land and natural habitat. The legislation also calls on MDE to identify priority restoration zones where adding living shorelines would prevent erosion and improve habitat connections between land and water. Additionally, the bill creates a fund to provide assistance in converting aging, degraded hardened shorelines into living shorelines.

Throughout Maryland, armored shorelines such as rip rap and bulkheads remain a primary approach to protect properties from erosion instead of living shorelines composed of sand, grasses, and other natural elements. Living shorelines provide more environmental benefits and flooding protection than armored alternatives. Constructing more living shorelines and expanding wetlands are our best ways to prepare Maryland's coastline as sea levels rise due to climate change.

Scientific models predict sea levels in coastal areas like Annapolis will rise 1.5 feet by 2050 and 3 feet by 2100, which would overwhelm our current infrastructure. If we continue armoring our shorelines in the face of this reality, we'll displace floodwaters to communities that can't afford to build ever-higher sea walls. Prioritizing living shorelines now will ensure more impactful solutions are in place as threats to Maryland's coastal communities continue to grow.

For these reasons, we request a Favorable report on HB 602.

Sincerely,

Blue Water Baltimore
Maryland Coastal Bays Program
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Maryland Ornithological Society
Maryland Pesticide Education Network