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**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1101 Standing – Environmental and Natural Resources Protection
Proceedings
(Clean Water Justice Act of 2024)**

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
March 26, 2024

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF HB1101**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

House Bill 1101 gives residents and communities harmed by illegal water pollution the ability to enforce state law through the courts – a right that unfortunately was stripped away when the U. S. Supreme Court removed federal, Clean Water Act protections for many of our streams and wetlands. Thankfully, Maryland law still protects these streams and wetlands; however, Maryland currently does not guarantee a right for communities to enforce the law like they were once able to under the Clean Water Act.

Wetlands and smaller streams store stormwater and filter out pollution, protecting our communities from flooding and poor water quality. These aquatic ecosystems are also among the most diverse habitats across the state, providing valuable niches of biodiversity across an increasingly urban landscape. Arundel Rivers and our communities are often on the front lines, monitoring these waterways and activities that threaten them. These communities should have the right to carry their findings forward in a courtroom to enforce existing law.

Arundel Rivers is respectfully requesting “government entity” be added back into the bill via amendment. Government entities should be held accountable, just like everyone else when they break clean water laws. Government entities are most often subject to suits for sewage overflows, something that is a grave risk to public health due to bacteria in the effluent. It is essential that our government also be held to the Clean Water Act.

For all these reasons, Arundel Rivers respectfully requests a **REPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
REPORT on HB1101.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation