



PO Box 760 Edgewater, MD
21037

410-224-3802
www.arundelrivers.org

**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 178 – Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan –
Requirements for State Highway Administration**

Senate Finance Committee
January 31, 2024

Dear Madam Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB178**, 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.

Senate Bill 178 will require the State Highway Administration (SHA) develop a pollinator habitat plan and encourage the use of pollinator-friendly native plants and maintenance practices along the 18,000 miles of roadside maintained by the State.

We have seen significant declines in pollinators and other wildlife species, highlighting the need for more native plant species that are critical in the food web and necessary for the survival of pollinator species.¹ Native plant species also provide a benefit to our local water quality. Native plants often have more extensive root systems and require less fertilizer than non-native species, resulting in improved downstream and riparian water quality due to less nutrient loading. Arundel Rivers Federation encourages residents within our watersheds to plant native species through our Bay Loving Landscapes Program. This bill will directly support that program by prioritizing native plant species being properly maintained and prioritized along state highways – a perfect location for pollinator-friendly plant species.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports expanding and protecting pollinator habitat to improve native plant habitats and local water quality and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB178**.

Sincerely,

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

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

¹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "What's the Buzz: All About Pollinators"
<https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/habitat/wawhatsthebuzz.aspx>