



Committee: Finance
Testimony on: SB178 - Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration
Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition
Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 31, 2024

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB178. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB178.

Habitat loss and fragmentation are the greatest threats to Maryland’s pollinators (i.e., bees, wasps, butterflies, moths, beetles, and flies). Climate change will further stress our state’s pollinators. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) manages over 50,000 acres of roadside areas outside of the paved surfaces, including forests, meadows, wetlands, and waterways, which provides a great opportunity to plant and manage pollinator–friendly native plants along state highways.

SB178 will strengthen existing law by requiring SHA’s Pollinator Habitat Plan (Plan) to include policies and procedures to encourage the use of pollinator–friendly native plants along state highways; develop and maintain them, to the extent feasible and in accordance with relevant safety standards for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians; and educate and communicate with the public about these pollinator habitat areas, including informational signs, information on the website and in social media, and outreach to community associations and elected officials. The bill also requires SHA to track and evaluate federal programs that provide funding for pollinator habitats, native plants, and invasive species control and to apply for funding as appropriate and beneficial to pollinator habitats. Finally, SHA must update the Plan annually and publish it on the SHA website, along with a list of the location and approximate size of current pollinator habitat areas maintained.

The Maryland Environmental Service Pollinator Protection Plan “recommends that the single most effective action that can be taken to boost healthy populations of both resident wild bees and domestic honey bees is to plant native wildflower habitat.”¹ Because SHA manages

¹ [Maryland Environmental Service Pollinator Habitat Plan](#), November 2018, page 7.

considerable roadside habitat, it can be developed and managed for the benefit of pollinators. SB178 strengthens the requirements for SHA to plant and manage pollinator-friendly native plants along state highways, to educate the public about their efforts, and to report progress annually.

We strongly support SB178 and urge a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.

350MoCo
Adat Shalom Climate Action
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry
Chesapeake Earth Holders
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Climate Parents of Prince George's
Climate Reality Project
ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition
Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
Echotopia
Elders Climate Action
Fix Maryland Rail
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
HoCoClimateAction
IndivisibleHoCoMD
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Mobilize Frederick
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Mountain Maryland Movement
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Progressive Maryland
Safe & Healthy Playing Fields
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
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