

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB 417 - Environment – State Wetlands – Shoreline Restoration

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 15, 2023

The organizations listed below respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 417, 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 SB 417.

Sincerely,

CONFIRMED SIGN-ONS:

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Blue Water Baltimore

Clean Water Action

Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Md Pesticide Education Network

Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

The League of Women Voters of Maryland