

Testimony of
Anne Lewis, FAIA
President, City Wildlife, Inc.
in support of the
Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022 - HB 43
MD General Assembly
March 22, 2022

City Wildlife is pleased to have this opportunity to submit favorable testimony to support passage of the Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022.

City Wildlife is a non-profit organization in the District of Columbia that has run the city's *Lights Out DC* program for twelve years. Volunteers for this program monitor glass buildings in the Union Station/Chinatown area and collect the dead and injured birds they find at these buildings. Since 2010, we have documented more than 4,400 bird strikes in this small downtown area, 84% of which were fatal, and these numbers are increasing every year as more glass buildings are built.

The goal of *Lights Out DC* is to prevent these tragic collisions through awareness, education, research, and policy action.



Some victims of bird/glass collisions
City Wildlife, Inc.

Nationally, up to one billion birds are killed each year by colliding with glass.

The victims of these collisions are all neo-tropical migrants -- beautiful birds -- many of whose populations are in serious decline. In fact, since 1970, North America has lost 29% of its breeding birds, and bird/glass collisions are one of the most significant sources of fatality for these valued and dwindling species. Places like DC and Maryland are on the Atlantic Flyway for

migrating birds, so our buildings need to be especially bird-safe. But unfortunately, they are not, and thousands of birds are being killed in our region every year.

These bird strikes take a human toll, too. Several years ago at a DC elementary school, 53 Cedar Waxwings collided with glass along a corridor over a period of several days during their spring migration. The teachers said the children were so traumatized that they had to be kept away from the corridor because it upset them too much to see the birds hitting the glass and dying on the ground. Many adults, too, have described how disturbing it is to see a bird hit a window -- an all-too-common experience that can make people dread coming to work.

The techniques to prevent these collisions are now well-known. There are simple and effective means of reducing bird/glass collisions through design, and -- especially if included during the initial construction phase -- need not add any additional cost to the project.

Many jurisdictions have now passed laws mandating bird-safe design, including New York City, San Francisco, Portland, Toronto, the states of Illinois and Minnesota, and others. Locally, the District of Columbia has added two optional bird-safe building credits to its Green Construction Code, and Howard County passed bird-safe legislation in 2020. In addition, the US House of Representatives has introduced a law requiring GSA's federal buildings to be bird-safe.

Bird Safe design is effective. In 2016, one of DC's problem buildings, the Washington Convention Center, installed bird-safe film at its L Street glass overpass, a feature that was killing many birds. The results have been dramatic: to date, we have seen an 85% reduction in bird strikes at this overpass. What's more, the film is nearly invisible. But it is always less expensive to construct a bird-safe building at the outset than to retrofit one.

In addition to reducing collisions, bird-safe measures can significantly reduce energy costs. The DC Court of Appeals, which now dims its atrium lights during migratory seasons, has reduced its atrium lighting costs by 15%. And the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building now dims its atrium lights at night all year, for a lighting cost reduction of 28%. Many buildings will find that dimming the lights all year can produce substantial savings with no loss of safety or functionality. And bird-safe glass design can also reduce heating and cooling costs.

We are thrilled that Maryland is considering this legislation and strongly support its passage. Establishing requirements for state owned or operated buildings will be highly effective, setting an important and highly visible standard for private construction to follow.

I am pleased to have been able to write in support of this legislation and would be glad to provide any information that might be helpful about our bird-collision data or experiences.

Respectfully submitted,
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