

March 22, 2022

SUPPORT

House Bill 43

Department of General Services – Energy – Conserving Standards
(Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022)

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice-chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

House Bill 43 is our opportunity, as legislators, to address a significant ecologic, economic, and environmental problem while simultaneously saving money. By modifying our building construction and operation standards, we can reduce energy costs to the state and decrease the up to a billion U.S. annual bird building-strike deaths. A complement to the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act Plan, **HB43** would modify the State’s High Performance Green Building Program. As in years past, **HB43** passed the House with bipartisan support, 101-33.

HB43 requires the

- Department of General Services to establish LEED 55 standards, periodically updated, for newly constructed, acquired, or substantially altered state buildings. The LEED 55 standards incorporate “bird-safe” designs for cladding, thus conserving energy **and** minimizing adverse impacts on birds;
- Maryland Green Building Council to include the standards in any requirements that the Council establishes for participation in a higher-performance building program;
- shielding from dusk to dawn, and minimization by use of automated technologies of building lighting, to the extent practicable and within budgetary constraints.

Incorporation of such architectural elements in the design and planning stage is cost-neutral and will reduce energy consumption substantially. The prevalent use of large amounts of glass/Plexiglas™ in building facades, particularly in tall buildings and skyscrapers, while architecturally and artistically appealing, when unthoughtfully done undermines energy conservation and climate change mitigation efforts, increases operational energy costs, and contributes to climate change. The buildings also become death traps as birds which, unable to detect the glass, strike it at high velocities. Next to predation by cats, building strikes are the second-highest cause of U.S. bird deaths. The **economic contribution of birding and other avian-related industries** and activities to Maryland’s **Total Industrial Output** is calculated by the Maryland Ornithological Society as over **\$909 million annually**, generating **10,807 full and part-time jobs**, and producing **\$88.4 million in state and local revenue**. Birds enhance our quality of life, control insect and other vermin populations, are key players in seed dispersal and pollination, serve as nourishment, and provide comfort, companionship, entertainment, protection and employment. The substitution of bird-safe glass/ Plexiglas™ in facades has been shown to **reduce bird strikes on buildings by more than 90%**. Plus, because transparent glass/Plexiglas™ is energy inefficient, and the allowable designs and materials - including secondary facades and physical elements such as ultraviolet patterned, matte, opaque, etched, stained, or frosted glass/Plexiglas™ - measurably increase energy efficiency, incorporation of LEED Silver 55 credit standards and bird-safe designs in construction **reduces energy maintenance costs**. Required adjustments around the use of lighting additively results in **significant net building operational savings**.

Talking about bird-safe buildings may seem featherbrained, but the huge ecologic, economic, and sociologic contributions made by our avian associates is why, as a signatory to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, Maryland has committed to protecting against, and our agencies are obligated to minimize, adverse effects on migratory birds.

Passing **HB43**, The Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022, is a win-win-win-win: saving tax payer dollars, mitigating climate change, decreasing the number of deadly bird strikes, and enhancing architectural aesthetics. I respectfully urge a favorable report.

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