



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: HB43 “Energy-Conserving Standards (Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022)”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 22, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges support for this legislation, which will require the Department of General Services to promulgate standards for state buildings to better protect our bird population and promote energy efficiency. In 2020, Howard County became the first county in Maryland to pass legislation addressing this issue, CB11-2020. Two states, Minnesota (2013) and Illinois (2021) have passed legislation. The latter is most similar to HB43 which requires bird safe building design in new and renovated state owned buildings.¹ Many other localities had previously passed legislation including, New York City, Madison, WI, Minneapolis, MN, Portland, OR, Washington, DC, as well as many cities in California and Canada.²

Maryland has a rich diversity of birds with 436 documented species, which is over half of the birds documented in the United States; 72 of these species are rare, threatened, or endangered. Maryland is located along the Atlantic flyway, where billions of birds migrate seasonally north to south and back again. Some birds are especially vulnerable and have been identified by the Audubon Society as priority birds to protect. These include the Golden-Winged Warbler, the Wood Thrush, the Black-Throated Blue Warbler, and many others.

As good stewards of our natural world, it is our responsibility to preserve biodiversity. It is estimated that up to one billion birds die by collision with glass in America, and we also know through research and practice that these deaths are preventable. The buildings we construct (or significantly renovate) can and should use bird-friendly design.

Importantly, with this bill, buildings become more energy efficient. While well-placed windows are critical to a building design, and allow for natural lighting, making windows increasingly bigger is detrimental to overall energy efficiency. Windows are the weakest link in the building envelope, therefore the greater the surface area of windows in a building, the more energy is needed to keep it cool in the summer and warm in the winter. In state-owned buildings, the taxpayers are paying for extra heating and cooling costs. This extra energy use also comes at a cost to the environment by contributing to climate change when it relies on fossil fuels.

In sum, incorporating bird-friendly design will save energy and protect birds. Maryland should take this first step to lead the way by adopting this legislation. We ask for a favorable report.

Lily Fountain
Chair, Natural Places Committee
Lily.Fountain@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

¹ <https://gl.audubon.org/news/new-law-will-protect-illinois-birds-deadly-building-collisions>

² <https://abcbirds.org/glass-collisions/existing-ordinances/>

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.