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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**HB 716 - PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION – MEMBERSHIP**

**SUPPORT**

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR BARVE AND VICE CHAIR STEIN AND ENT COLLEAGUES, I AM HERE TODAY ASKING FOR YOUR FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF HB 716.

HOUSE BILL 716 WILL MAKE THE PATUXENT RIVERKEEPER A PERMANENT, FULL VOTING MEMBER OF THE PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION, WHICH IS CHARGED WITH PROTECTING AND PRESERVING THE LONGEST, DEEPEST RIVER IN MD.

THE PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION WAS ESTABLISHED IN STATE LAW IN 1984, AND CURRENTLY HAS 34 MEMBERS. THE LAW SPECIFIES THERE MUST BE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SEVEN COUNTIES IN THE WATERSHED, PLUS THE CITY OF LAUREL. THERE ALSO ARE ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDER AND INTEREST GROUP MEMBERS.

AT THE END OF 2021, GOVERNOR HOGAN UNEXPECTEDLY DISMISSED THE PATUXENT RIVERKEEPER VIA LETTER, WITHOUT EXPLANATION, AND REPLACED THE RIVERKEEPER, AS WELL AS THREE OTHER APPOINTEES TO THE COMMISSION, WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO DON'T RESIDE IN THE PATUXENT WATERSHED.

THE CURRENT PATUXENT RIVERKEEPER, FRED TUTMAN, LIVES ON THE PATUXENT, JUST AS HIS ANCESTORS HAVE FOR SEVEN GENERATIONS. THIS BILL IS NOT ABOUT MR. TUTMAN THOUGH. IT IS ABOUT THE NEED TO HAVE THE **POSITION** OF RIVERKEEPER ON THE

COMMISSION, A PERSON WHO IS UNIQUELY QUALIFIED BECAUSE HE OR SHE IS THE STEWARD OF THIS WATERSHED.

AS AN ADVOCATE WHOSE GOAL IS TO PROTECT AND BUILD COMMUNITY SUPPORT AROUND THE WATER QUALITY OF THE PATUXENT, THE RIVERKEEPER SERVES A VITAL ROLE.

THE PATUXENT RIVER IS IMPORTANT TO MARYLAND, BOTH HISTORICALLY, ENVIRONMENTALLY AND ECONOMICALLY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE WATER QUALITY BARELY ACHIEVES ABOVE A "D-" RATING.

WE NEED TO DO MUCH MORE TO RESTORE THE HEALTH OF THE PATUXENT. THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO REMOVE EXPERTS AND INDIVIDUALS FROM A BODY TASKED WITH OVERSIGHT OF WATERSHED PRESERVATION, RESTORATION AND WATER QUALITY.

THIS IS A STRAIGHTFORWARD BILL REQUESTING THE ADDITION OF A SPECIFIC POSITION — THAT OF RIVERKEEPER — TO THE PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION.

I URGE A FAVORABLE REPORT.

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