



February 21, 2022

**Patuxent River Commission - Membership (HB 716)**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Blue Water Baltimore, home of the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper, is a nonprofit organization with a mission to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. We write today in support of "Patuxent River Commission - Membership" (House Bill 716).

As a fellow Waterkeeper organization, the Patuxent Riverkeeper is our peer in the international Waterkeeper Alliance and serves to speak on behalf of the Patuxent River and amplify the voices of the people who live, work, and recreate within the Patuxent River watershed. A central tenet of the Patuxent Riverkeeper is to uphold the best interests of the river above all else, and in my capacity as Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper I have seen Fred Tutman fulfill that role consistently over the past eight years. House Bill 716 guarantees a seat on the Patuxent River Commission to the Patuxent Riverkeeper, and ensures that advocates for the community and the environment retain their rightful place on the Commission.

In his role as Patuxent Riverkeeper, Fred has fought against dangerous over-development within the watershed for decades, and in December 2021 he was erroneously dismissed from the Patuxent River Commission by the Maryland Department of Planning. He is the eighth generation of his family to be born and raised along the Patuxent and has been a prominent voice for protecting the Patuxent River for decades. He is the nation's only Black Riverkeeper, and he has dedicated his life's work to protecting and restoring this iconic waterway. It is paramount that lifelong advocates like Fred are secured a seat at the table to guide decision makers toward solutions that meaningfully improve the state of the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake Bay.

**For these reasons, Blue Water Baltimore, on behalf of our thousands of members and supporters, respectfully urges a Favorable Report on HB 716. Thank you.**

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