

Date: January 18, 2022

Bill: HB 43 – Department of General Services – Energy- Conserving Standards (Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022)

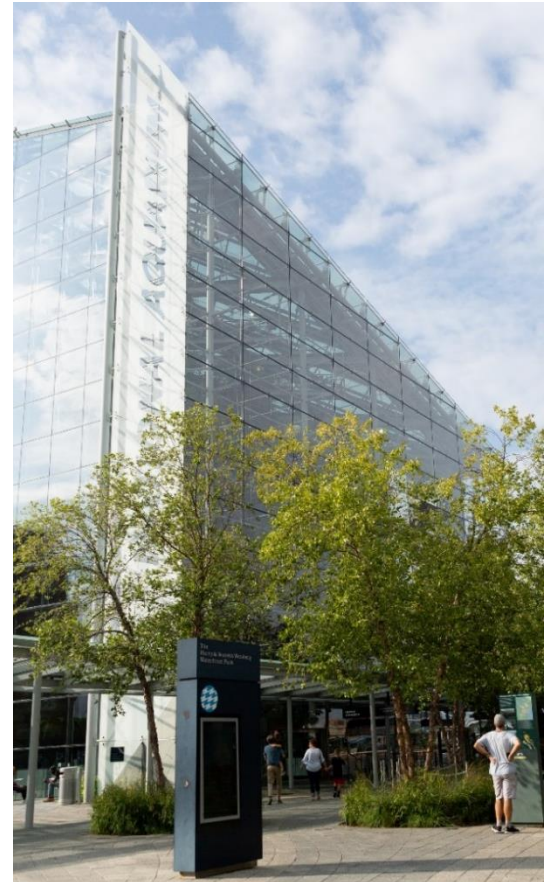
Position: Support

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 43, Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2022**, which will help minimize fatal bird strikes across Maryland.

It is estimated that window strikes are a leading cause of bird population decline, second only to habitat loss. Baltimore and much of Maryland lie within a major migratory pathway for birds, some flying from as far away as South America. Thankfully, steps can be taken to dramatically limit fatal bird strikes and preserve bird populations through building design, installation of bird-safe glass and films, and limits to interior lighting at night.

In recent years, the National Aquarium has worked with our animal care experts to cover over 3,000 sq. ft of existing glass with bird-safe dot patterns. This includes the 1,300 sq. ft “wing wall”, pictured here, that was responsible for over 70 percent of all bird strikes at the Aquarium. The wing wall film serves a dual purpose by using the bird dot patterns to display the National Aquarium’s name on the building. This simple approach created new, highly visible signage and has significantly reduced bird strikes on the building. Since installing the patterns in 2018, the average number of bird strikes per year dropped 74%.



National Aquarium “wing wall”. Design credit: Ayers Saint Gross

Additionally, thanks to the state’s support, the Aquarium is in the process of replacing the failed glass pyramid above the *Upland Tropical Rain Forest*. The new glass pyramid will be made of entirely bird safe glass and increase energy efficiency within the exhibit. Incorporating bird safe glass into the design will also save money compared to retrofitting the pyramid with bird safe dots and films.

HB 43 would help mitigate bird strikes across the state by requiring similar strategies be utilized on state buildings or that bird-safe building and design standards be considered from the start of new projects. Our experience shows that many of the methods used to prevent bird strikes not only make a significant difference but also have several benefits beyond decreasing bird fatalities. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 43.**

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