



## Testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB 0282 – Maryland Forestry Education Fund

February 7, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB 0282** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

Maryland loses about 3,000 acres of forest every year. Forest clearing contributes to poor water quality, fragmentation and loss of wildlife habitat, reduced carbon sequestration, air pollution, increased temperatures, localized flooding, and lower property values. On the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where more than 60% of all land use is shaped by agricultural activities, the negative impacts of irresponsible forestry on an already under forested landscape are more acute, as are the detriments to local water quality.

**The shorelines of the Chester River are defined by Kent and Queen Annes counties—the two least treed counties in the state. As the Chester Riverkeeper, I work with local counties to protect what mature forests exist within the Chester's watershed, with an understanding that positive effects for water health are not the only benefits forests can bring to a community and its economy when done sustainably.**

This bill will increase education and support for district forestry boards and landowners with emphasis on healthy forest management, ecological service markets, emerging forest threats, climate science, forest conservation, urban forestry, sustainable science, forestry policy, and best practices. It will also provide small grants for landowners to trial innovative best practices on their forest lands.

Trees are one of the most positive long-term investments that can be made to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, and many of our trees are threatened by the ongoing effects of climate change, as well as development activities within our watersheds. **By educating our counties and our communities on the importance and value of our mature forests, and by connecting individuals with the resources to better steward privately owned forests, we can increase our chances of protecting and increasing forest canopy across our region.**

We support this bill for increased forestry education and resources, and urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 0282**.

Sincerely,

**Annie Richards**

Chester Riverkeeper, on behalf of ShoreRivers

**ShoreRivers**

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

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