



**Testimony in Support with amendments of Senate Bill 417 –  
Environment – State Wetlands – Shoreline Restoration**

February 14, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in support with amendments of SB 417**, 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.

At ShoreRivers, shoreline erosion is one of the most common reasons a community member reaches out for consultation from a Riverkeeper. Almost always, we recommend living shorelines as the most beneficial solution, both for the homeowner, and for the health of the waterway. However, the cost of implementation is incredibly high due to fuel prices, and also the labor required to walk a project through the permitting process. As a result, many homeowners seek waivers to implement armored shorelines or do nothing at all.

**SB 0417 seeks to curb the widespread issuance of waivers to the existing living shorelines law, requires an assessment to identify where living shorelines can be installed, and creates a fund for grants to convert degraded hardened shorelines into living shorelines.**

Armored shorelines provide no beneficial habitat for local fish populations. In fact, a recent NOAA study identifies that within a 1,000ft shoreline, of 30% or greater of that shoreline is armored, it will negatively impact fish reproduction— a detriment to the biodiversity of the Chesapeake and to our local fishing economies. Also, the lifespan of an armored shoreline is significantly less than a living shoreline. As impacts of climate change increase, rising tides will spill over bulkheads and riprap, causing them to degrade and collapse. On the low-lying Eastern Shore, an area of Maryland that will likely be impacted first and hardest by sea level rise, it is imperative that we implement the most resilient and dynamic shorelines to protect our communities.

**ShoreRivers recommends an amendment to incentivize all residents to make the right choice, and implement living shorelines: Grant funding should be made available to any property within a priority restoration area, not just properties with armored shorelines. Residents who live within the identified priority areas (i.e. those who are unable to secure a waiver for an armored shoreline) will likely result in the resident taking no action at all due to costs. If the goal is to implement more living shorelines across the state, then more widespread incentives should be incorporated into this legislation.**

Living shorelines provide important habitat to estuarian life found in the Chesapeake, as well as protection from flooding and runoff— these benefits far outweigh anything provided by armored alternatives. For these reasons we urge the committee **to adopt a favorable report, with amendments for SB 417.**

Sincerely,

**Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper** on behalf of ShoreRivers

**ShoreRivers**

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

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