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Baltimore Jewish Council
An agency of The Associated



ROCK CREEK
CONSERVANCY



Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 471 – Water Pollution Control – Discharge Permits – Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity

Environment and Transportation Committee

March 29, 2023

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee,

The **undersigned organizations** write today in **SUPPORT** of SB471. This legislation addresses perhaps the most visible form of pollution that our organizations, our supporters, members of this committee, and residents across Maryland see on a regular basis: sediment pollution running off of construction sites. Unfortunately, it is also a form of pollution that has been difficult to curb due to the lack of an adequate deterrent and standards for inspecting pollution complaints. The amended version of SB471 will directly address that difficulty.

According to the U.S. EPA, sediment runoff from construction sites can be 1,000 to 2,000 times greater than runoff from forested lands. Even just a short burst of rain “can contribute more sediment to streams than would be deposited naturally over several decades.”¹ These quick bursts of mud-filled water can destroy a stream and aquatic ecosystem. The cost to repair the damaged streams or dredge the sediment-filled creeks is currently passed along to taxpayers.

At a time when Maryland is seeking to achieve its 2025 Chesapeake Bay restoration goals, we must act to protect our most vulnerable waterways from construction-related pollution. With this bill, State and local authorities will have more efficient tools they need to better prevent pollution before it occurs.

The bill as amended gives MDE and MD residents the tools we need to protect our environment from sediment pollution from construction sites in the face of climate change. Specifically, SB471:

- 1) Requires MDE to review and update specifications for sediment and erosion control plans once every five years,
- 2) Ensures that these updates will be guided by a stakeholder workgroup to include representatives from counties, municipalities, builders, academics, and watershed organizations; and
- 3) Gives residents the opportunity to request an extended public notice period of 60 days for construction projects in sensitive areas so that more eyes from MDE and public will be on the sediment and erosion control plans for these areas.

This bill will result in better protection for our most sensitive lands and waterways. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB471.

Sincerely,

Arundel Rivers Federation
Assateague Coastal Trust
Baltimore Jewish Council
Blue Water Baltimore
Center for Progressive Reform
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Potomac Conservancy
Rock Creek Conservancy
Sierra Club Maryland
ShoreRivers
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper

ⁱ Stormwater Phase II Final Rule: Construction Site Runoff Control Minimum Control Measure. US EPA. 2018. pg. 2. available at: [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-12/documents/epa_stormwater_phase_ii_final_rule_factsheet_2.6_construction_runoff_12-04-18.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-12/documents/epa_stormwater_phase_ii_final_rule_factsheet_2.6_construction_runoff_12-04-18.pdf).