



Maryland Office
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February 27, 2024

To: Chairman Wilson and members of the Maryland House Economic Matters Committee

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland HB 1407 County Tier 1 Renewable Sources – Generating Systems, Capacity, and Generation – Prohibition, Studies, and Plans

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of House Bill 1407. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. We work with partner organizations, government agencies, and local communities, using science to protect birds and the places they need to survive. Audubon supports HB 1407 because it will help the state of Maryland reach our climate goals and protect birds from the impact of climate change now and into the future.

Adopting renewable energy is critical to reducing pollution, lowering temperatures, and preserving the places that birds need to survive. Audubon supports renewable energy - including wind and solar —that is properly sited in ways that avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts on birds and other wildlife.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and climate change. 1/3 of eastern forest and grassland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. Iconic Maryland birds such as the Wood Thrush, American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Meadowlark and Baltimore Oriole are in decline. On the Eastern Shore the endangered salt marsh sparrow is losing critical habitat each year due to climate related sea-level rise. HB 1407 will enable Maryland to slow and reverse these trends by encouraging a transition to non-greenhouse gas energy production in Maryland.

From our Atlantic shoreline and Chesapeake Bay marshes to our urban parks and western Maryland mountains, birds in Maryland are under threat. Birds and the special Maryland landscapes they depend on will benefit from the measures of HB 1407. Just as birds and people use every jurisdiction in the state, we believe that every county must play their part to determine how the state meets our energy and climate needs. HB1407 will facilitate that process. While not everywhere is appropriate for renewable energy development, local municipalities will benefit from working with the PSC, state agencies, the public, and environmental organizations to form appropriate siting targets, incentivizing appropriate siting so each county can be part of Maryland’s climate action planning process.

The Science tells us:

- Greenhouse gas induced climate change is the most significant threat to birds and people in Maryland.
- Transitioning to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar will mitigate and slow the impacts of climate change on our vulnerable human and bird communities.
- When proper siting considerations are followed, wind and solar development minimizes threats to birds and other wildlife.

With proper siting considerations and robust engagement from the scientific community HB 1407 will protect birds by creating a more resilient environment. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in climate action and equitable land-use planning. It will also help the state reach the ambitious goals established in the important Climate Solutions Now Act.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

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