



## **HB1165 and SB969 The Whole Watershed Act**

### **TESTIMONY OF DR. MARK SOUTHERLAND -- Favorable**

I received a Ph.D. and Smithsonian Fellowship in freshwater ecology and have consulted for federal, state, and local agencies on water resource issues for 30 years. I am the founder of Vernal Pool Partners and have served with the Maryland Academy of Sciences' Science Council, Maryland Water Monitoring Council, Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board, Howard County Conservancy, Patapsco Heritage Greenway, and Safe Skies Maryland.

### **Maryland is not on track to meet its 2025 Chesapeake Bay Restoration Goals**

The Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) Report, released in May 2023 and written by 100 scientists from across the watershed, makes recommendations to improve results, that include:

- Refocusing on shallow water and shallow-water habitats.
- Connecting water quality with how people interact with the resource.
- Better targeting interventions as Maryland's restoration structure currently does not prioritize the best combination of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

### **The Whole Watershed Act will ground test a new holistic approach to restoration by**

- Prioritizing \$20M in state funding toward five whole watershed restoration projects for five years.
- Selecting watersheds that represent different geographies and land use types with a priority for Environmental Justice communities. Selected watersheds will demonstrate community involvement and the ability to demonstrate progress on a relatively expedited timeline.
- Requiring practices that provide multiple co-benefits to support the health of the whole watershed and community.
- Establishing a State Management Team consisting of multiple state agencies, local experts, and more to select projects, monitor and support progress, and expedite the permitting process.
- Creating a new certification for practitioners who complete restoration projects to uphold standards and ensure quality.

The Time is Now. If we wait, we will continue to implement less-effective restoration projects and fall further behind our goals of pollution reduction and biodiversity improvement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Southerland", is written over a light blue circular background.

Vernal Pool Partners