

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee  
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 303  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3606 · 301-858-3606  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3606  
Benjamin.Brooks@senate.state.md.us

*District Office*  
Windsor Mill Office  
8419 Liberty Road, Suite B  
Windsor Mill, Maryland 21244  
410-496-4037

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB916**  
**Fish and Wildlife – Endangered and Threatened Species – Definitions, Petitions,  
and Regulations**

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
February 16, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB916 Fish and Wildlife – Endangered and Threatened Species – Definitions, Petitions, and Regulations. The purpose of this bill is to codify the way in which the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) identifies and reviews endangered and threatened species.

As of November 2023, the Maryland Wildlife and Heritage Service has identified 526 native Maryland animals that are most in need of conservation efforts. These creatures play a crucial role in the State’s ecosystem, however, the current mechanisms that DNR uses to identify these animals are internal and uncodified procedures. SB916 will ensure that Maryland’s best practices for endangered and threatened species are reflected in law.

The bill will codify the scientific evidence requirements for petitions to list and delist an endangered species. This will not only make the petitioning process more transparent, but it will also ensure that the Agency lists and delists animals with an evidence-based process. Further, the bill requires DNR, by July 1, 2026, and at least every five years, to review and update the animal and plant protected species lists. Having up-to-date information on the state of an endangered species allows the Agency to better protect them while efficiently distributing its resources. Lastly, this bill will give a more comprehensive definition to “fish” and “wildlife”. The Endangered Species Act is unclear whether sea-life like sponges, corals, and barnacles are considered protected creatures along with certain other species. Despite this ambiguity, it is still necessary to safeguard these creatures which is why DNR currently interprets the Endangered Species Act to include all animals. SB916 will fix this lack of clarity and ensure that these kinds of species remain protected.

These proposed changes have little impact on the current day-to-day operations of DNR while ensuring that the Agency's best practices for endangered and threatened species are clear and codified.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB916.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks