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Testimony in SUPPORT of HB0729 - Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2024

Environment and Transportation Committee
February 21, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB0729**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

House Bill 729 will create regulations to protect currently unprotected vernal pool wetlands and their buffers. Vernal pools provide unique habitat for amphibians and other aquatic species that simply cannot be provided in other, perpetually wet environments. Typically, fish and other aquatic predators are able to move throughout wet landscapes to find food sources and smaller aquatic species - especially larval stages of amphibians - are placed at risk in such landscapes. However, vernal pools are uniquely disconnected from the broader rivers and streams for most of the year, offering a haven for these creatures that otherwise would not exist.¹

Additionally, seasonally wet areas, such as vernal pools, provide critical water storage during wet times of the year, allowing seasonal snowmelt and rainwater to be stored in small pockets across the landscape without exacerbating downstream flooding or pollution problems.

For these reasons, many states have long protected vernal pools and other seasonally wet areas from disturbance and we encourage the State of Maryland to now do the same.

Arundel Rivers Federation respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB0729**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Johnston".

Matt Johnston
Executive Director
Arundel Rivers Federation

¹ Tarr, M. and Babbitt, K. The Importance of Hydroperiod in Wetland Assessment: A guide for community officials, planners, and natural resource professionals. University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Available at: https://extension.unh.edu/sites/default/files/migrated_unmanaged_files/Resource000812_Rep847.pdf.