



HB1284 –Wetlands and Waterways Program - Stream Restoration Projects

Testimony before House Environment & Transportation Committee

March 6, 2024

Position: Favorable

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the committee, my name is Crystal Konny, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB1284**, Wetlands and Waterways Program – Stream Restoration Projects. We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Terrasa and her colleagues for sponsoring this important legislation.

This legislation will increase community input, require projects to have measurable goals and objectives at the onset to measure success of the project, and waive the current exemption of application fees for stream restoration projects, which will produce some funding for MDE.

Land development has resulted in large areas of impervious surface, such as roads and roofs. These impervious surfaces, along with increased storm intensity due to climate change, cause excessive stormwater runoff flowing into streams. These flows cause excessive erosion along stream banks and flooding that in turn causes property damage and damage to streams and surrounding natural areas. But many stream “restoration” projects in Maryland actually involve substantial destruction of natural ecosystems. A common approach requires removal of mature trees and using heavy construction machinery which destroys existing undergrowth and microorganism habitat. And if upland stormwater runoff is not addressed, uncontrolled stormwater can continue to cause erosion and damage to the “restored” stream. Stream restoration projects receive preferential incentives under stormwater management regulations.

A far better approach would be to minimize stormwater runoff by controlling stormwater at its source. I personally have water that runs through my front and back yards with force during strong rainfall events. If my neighbors and I could get help mitigating the flow on our properties, the water would not get to the stream behind my house and would not cause erosion. Helping homeowners would be more effective and efficient with limited taxpayer dollars. In some cases, County and State property could be modified, for example with a retention pond or rain garden, which would again, prevent the water from flowing closer to the source of the water.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to pass the Wetlands and Waterways Program – Stream Restoration Projects bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

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