



February 27, 2024

Honorable Chair Korman and Members of the House Environment and Transportation  
Committee  
Room 251 House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Wildlands Network supports funding wildlife corridor projects through HB1129

Dear Honorable Chair Korman and Members of the House Environment and Transportation  
Committee

My name is Misty Boos, and I am the U.S. Conservation Policy Manager for Wildlands Network. For thirty years, Wildlands Network has been a conservation leader specializing in restoring and protecting wildlife's ability to move across connected landscapes through science-based research and innovative policy. We are pleased to support [HB1129](#), which will connect habitat and reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. This bill will also create a Highway Crossing Fund to help pay for wildlife crossing infrastructure projects, as well as the research needed to determine where best to site crossing locations.

Wildlife collisions are expensive and dangerous. The odds of hitting a deer or other animal are 1 in 116 in Maryland, and almost [2,000 people](#) were killed in crashes involving deer, including 14 in Maryland from 2012-2021, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. There were nearly [33,000](#) deer-vehicle collisions alone in Maryland in 2017, and the cost of these collisions exceeds [\\$100 million](#) annually. That figure does not include the costs associated with collisions with other animals, nor does it consider the costs associated with biodiversity loss.

Now, more than ever, we need to rethink how our infrastructure can better serve people and wildlife. The U.S. Department of Transportation has estimated that motorists collide with over [1 million](#) large animals each year, and [roughly 365 million](#) vertebrates (the equivalent of the entire U.S. human population) die from vehicle strikes. Beyond these deadly collisions, roads fragment the landscape and create barriers to wildlife's ability to find food and mates. Reducing habitat fragmentation is one of the most frequently recommended climate adaptation strategies we can use to support biodiversity. Wildlife crossings give species the ability to move safely as they adapt to a changing climate.

Many states across the U.S. are taking action. Over 20 states passed legislation in recent years encouraging smart infrastructure to facilitate wildlife movement and improve habitat connectivity. Properly-sited wildlife crossings can reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions [by over 90 percent](#), helping reduce driver deaths, injuries, and the costs of damage to vehicles. Wildlife crossing legislation has attracted broad, bipartisan support because wildlife crossings offer a cost-effective method to protect people and support our wildlife.

[HB1129](#) is incredibly timely, given the influx of federal dollars available for wildlife crossing and habitat connectivity projects that require non-federal matching dollars. Other states are taking notice and are taking advantage of the unprecedented amount of federal funding available. Creating a Highway Crossing Fund would provide significant leverage for obtaining capital from the numerous federal and private funding sources available today, including the [Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program](#), a competitive grant with the goal of reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions while improving habitat connectivity. Over 5 years, \$350 million will be awarded to applicants through this program, which provides 80% federal funding for construction, planning, design, and feasibility study needs to reduce wildlife-vehicle conflict. The program will cover 90% of project costs for projects located on interstates. Last year, \$110 million in grants were awarded for [19 wildlife crossing projects in 17 states](#), including eastern states like Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Vermont, Connecticut, and Virginia. Passing [HB1129](#) will provide Maryland with funding to cover the required non-federal share for projects, making the state more competitive for this program. The Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program is just one of at least 15 other funds created or expanded by the [Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act](#) that can help pay for habitat connectivity and wildlife crossing infrastructure projects.

We urge you to support [HB1129](#) to put Maryland on the path toward a safer future for both people and wildlife.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Misty Boos  
U.S. Public Policy Manager  
Wildlands Network