



PO Box 760 Edgewater, MD 21037
410-224-3802 www.arundelrivers.org

**Testimony encouraging a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 655 – Environment – Wetlands –
Shoreline Stabilization Measures**

Environment and Transportation
February 21, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **FAVOR** of HB655, 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.

HB655 will prohibit exemptions of the requirement for certain shoreline stabilization measures such as living shorelines projects solely on the basis of replacing a structural shoreline with the same or similar type of structural shoreline stabilization measure. The bill will also dedicate grant funding for the replacement of armored structural shorelines with nonstructural shorelines. This funding will assist property owners in converting deteriorating hardened shorelines that provide little to no habitat and are susceptible to rising tides to living shorelines that are more resilient to rising tides and provide the much-needed beneficial aquatic and terrestrial habitat along our tidal waters. These are crucial next steps to building resilient, natural shorelines across Anne Arundel County.

Oftentimes, the best opportunity to replace a shoreline structure is when an old structure has failed. However, the long permitting process, lack of funding for quick replacements and existing law and practices incentivizes replacing such structures with similar, “in-kind” hardened structures. This is exactly what happened across Anne Arundel County following a high tide flooding event in October of 2021. Many property owners reported severe damage to their shoreline structures to the County and State and sought immediate assistance to replace their structures and protect their property. Unfortunately, the processes and funding were not in place to offer these property owners with the option of replacing their failed structures with living shorelines in a cost-efficient and expeditious manner. This bill will take a step towards reassessing those properties for non-structural opportunities and may provide funding assistance to help implement those projects.

Arundel Rivers Federation encourages the replacement of hardened shorelines with resilient living shorelines when possible, and respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB655**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett

South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation