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**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 969 – Stream and Watershed Restoration – Stream
Restoration Contractor Licensing and
Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Funding
(The Whole Watershed Act)**

Education, Energy, and the Environment
March 5, 2024

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB969**, 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.

Senate Bill 969 will take an innovative and targeted approach towards achieving our water quality goals in our Maryland watersheds. The Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) report, released in 2023 identified that more attention and work is needed in addressing restoration implementation gaps. This bill will result in five selected watersheds that will prioritize partnerships and co-benefits across multiple geographies and land uses across the state to be chosen for targeted restoration funding and implementation.

Additionally, Senate Bill 969 will create a new licensing board for contractors installing stream restoration services. Stream restoration is one of the best tools in the “restoration toolbox” that we have to both reconnect our eroded stream banks and reduce sediment and nutrient loading downstream. Creating a licensing program will ensure that contractors are implementing quality projects in our watersheds.

Arundel Rivers is favorable to the bill as currently written but we have been made aware of potential amendments and we look forward to reviewing them.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports restoring our local waterways to meet Chesapeake Bay clean up goals and to provide a more fishable and swimmable environment for our communities and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB969**.

Sincerely,

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

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation