



**HB 729 - Department of the Environment - Nontidal Wetlands - Protection of Vernal Pools
(Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2024)**

Position: SUPPORT

Date: February 21, 2024

Contact: Anna Mudd, Potomac Conservancy

Vernal pools are unique, small ecosystems that support biodiversity and provide habitat for several critical species including the state-endangered tiger salamander. They also provide vital ecosystem services such as replenishing groundwater and filtering stormwater. Vernal pools are seasonal wetlands that are often overlooked and filled or poorly managed. These wetlands are being lost at a rapid rate because they often do not meet current Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) wetlands regulations or qualify for federal protections under the Clean Water Act.

House Bill 729 would designate vernal pools as named wetlands in MDE regulations. It would protect vernal pools supporting amphibian species, including a 100-foot buffer needed to support full life cycles and would require MDE to prepare a plan for providing the public with location of vernal pools and other wetlands. For these reasons, **Potomac Conservancy requests a FAVORABLE report on (HB 729) the Vernal Pool Protection Act of 2024 from the Environment and Transportation Committee.**

Sincerely,

Anna Mudd
Senior Policy Director
Potomac Conservancy