



P.O. Box 278  
Riverdale, MD 20738

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: H.B. 729 – Nontidal Wetlands – Protection of Vernal Pools (Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2024)**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: February 21, 2024**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports H.B. 729, the Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2024. The bill would require the Department of the Environment (MDE) to develop a plan for identifying vernal pools in Maryland and to preserve and protect vernal pools. MDE would have to complete its plan for protecting vernal pools no later than October 1, 2025.

Vernal pools are unique, biodiverse ecosystems that provide critical habitat for endangered species such as the tiger salamander. As noted in the bill text, many amphibians like wood frogs cannot reproduce in any other habitats but vernal pools. Maryland receives significant ecological services from these seasonal wetlands because they replenish groundwater reservoirs and filter stormwater surges. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “The unique environment of vernal pools provides habitat for numerous rare plants and animals that are able to survive and thrive in these harsh conditions. Many of these plants and animals spend the dry season as seeds, eggs, or cysts, and then grow and reproduce when the ponds are again filled with water.”<sup>i</sup> Currently, vernal pools are not protected under the federal Clean Water Act nor current MDE wetlands regulations. This means that vernal pools are not managed well and are being swiftly lost across the state.

H.B. 729 would help MDE preserve the remaining vernal pools in Maryland and provide the public with information about these critically important and biodiverse ecosystems. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club encourages lawmakers to vote in support of H.B. 729.

Sarah Peters  
Natural Places Committee  
[petesa05@gmail.com](mailto:petesa05@gmail.com)

Josh Tulkin  
Chapter Director  
[Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org](mailto:Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org)

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/vernal-pools>