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**Committee: Environment & Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB1284 “Wetlands and Waterways Program - Stream Restoration Projects”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: March 6, 2024**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB1284 “Wetlands and Waterways Program - Stream Restoration Projects”. This bill contains several key elements to improve outcomes for stream restorations and the environment in Maryland.

The bill requires stream restoration applicants to include information on how the project aligns with or improves measurable and quantifiable ecological uplift, Chesapeake Bay water quality, forest conservation, and climate change. It would require applicants to provide a plan for pre- and post-project monitoring of the health of biological communities and water quality both upstream and downstream of the project. It would also require: a plan for using the Before-After-Control-Impact methodology to evaluate the impacts of activities of the project; a project plan for tree removal minimization that includes mapping trees larger than about 2 inches caliper; an accounting of any additional trees lost or removed during the project process; measurable standards for determining success of the stream restoration; and a plan for addressing upland best management practices, which are underused at this time due to the projects’ incentive structure. Finally, the bill requires a plan to address unintended impacts of the stream restoration listed in the Chesapeake Bay Program’s publication “[A Unified Guide for Crediting Stream and Floodplain Restoration Projects in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#),” table 19.

This bill also provides guardrails for stream restorations by increasing the notice given to the public; a 60-day comment period; multiple public meetings; and public updates on the Maryland Department of the Environment website on the results of stream restorations and actions taken if goals are not met.

We support this bill because it requires the accountability that our important stream resources require. Stream valleys are often the last bastions of biodiversity, especially for amphibians and birds, and understory habitats for other wildlife. We strongly commend the bill’s emphasis on measurable, quantifiable standards, backed by scientific research. The pre- and post-project evaluation of the stream valley condition and upstream and downstream impacts will provide urgently needed information on the impacts of these projects on Maryland streams and communities that can inform the best use of our tax dollars in addressing stormwater problems and biodiversity loss.

In summary, because this bill provides common-sense protections for Maryland’s stream valleys, we request a favorable report.

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