

Favorable Testimony on SB 546 / HB 655
Environment - State Wetlands - Shoreline Stabilization Measures

The organizations listed below respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 546 and HB 655, which curbs the continued widespread use of armored shorelines and clarifies existing law by clarifying existing state law concerning waivers to build new armored shorelines and creates a future potential funding source for the conversion of existing armored shorelines into living shorelines.

Throughout Maryland, armored shorelines such as rip rap and bulkheads remain a primary approach to protect properties from erosion instead of living shorelines composed of sand, grasses, and other natural elements. Living shorelines provide more environmental benefits and flooding protection than armored alternatives. Constructing more living shorelines and expanding wetlands are our best ways to prepare Maryland's coastline as sea levels rise due to climate change.

Scientific models predict sea levels in coastal areas like Annapolis will rise 1.5 feet by 2050 and 3 feet by 2100, which would overwhelm our current infrastructure. If we continue armoring our shorelines in the face of this reality, we'll displace floodwaters to communities that can't afford to build ever-higher sea walls. Continuing to prioritize living shorelines now will ensure more impactful solutions are in place as threats to Maryland's coastal communities continue to grow.

In 2008, Maryland showed national leadership by adopting a requirement to install living shorelines where they are supported. Now, we can build on that success by clarifying the existing law and providing resources to recognize the cumulative environmental benefits of living shorelines.

For these reasons, we request a Favorable report on SB 546 and HB 655.

Sincerely,

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Potomac Conservancy

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

Severn River Association

The Nature Conservancy MD/DC Chapter

Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice

Anne Arundel Bird Club

Maryland Ornithological Society

Safe Skies Maryland

Southern Maryland Audubon Society

