

Senate Bill 353 – SUPPORT

**Senate Bill 353 – Environment - CAD Task Force
House Committee on Environment and Transportation
March 25, 2024**

My name is Kelly Spencer. I live in the waterfront community of Riviera Beach in Northern Anne Arundel County. I grew up visiting my grandparents in Riviera Beach and was blessed to be able to experience waterfront living at their home. I was always interested in biology and my interest grew stronger playing, swimming, fishing, crabbing, jet skiing, paddle boating, boating, digging in the sand and observing jellyfish, grass shrimp, horseshoe crabs, minnows, snakes, ducks, egrets, eagles, cormorants, seagulls, and osprey among others. The educational and enriching exposure to Rock Creek, the Potapsco River and Stoney Creek drew me to move to this unique community. I've now lived in Riviera Beach for the past 16 years and cherish getting to share these same experiences with my coming baby and my 3.5-year-old daughter who adores walking to the community beach areas and playing in the sand and water. My family spends endless hours of quality time walking with our dog along the waterways and community beach. Waterfront living makes our community special, desirable, and invaluable. I have a master's degree in biology from Towson University and have been working in environmental biology for 18 years. I work in the City of Baltimore's Water Facilities Division, Reservoir Natural Resources Section. I am a Pollution Control Analyst and I routinely monitor water quality in the city owned drinking water reservoirs and several of their tributaries. I was immediately interested in hearing more about the Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) project. I attended the community meeting in June 2023 and was disturbed at the information presented by the Maryland Port Authority (MPA).

The first red flag was the lack of transparency and outreach on the part of the MPA regarding this project. If there were no concerns, why didn't they promote their project to the surrounding communities? The second red flag was using the pilot study conducted at Masonville Cove as validation for the safety of using CAD. The study was an initial look into using CAD and provided preliminary research at best. The pilot study is not comparable to MPA's chosen CAD site. The length of the study is a mere fraction of the infinite existence of the CAD site. The cove is a small, sheltered space that does not experience the same events as the open MPA site does. The pilot site is not exposed to the same activities such as the high traffic of boaters, fishers, crabbers, and the higher speeds of boaters, adverse weather events and wave mixing action as in the CAD area. The study is a poor representation of the permanent CAD site and gives little insight on possible and likely impacts the CAD project will create. My pressing concerns are that the pilot study results are not useful in determining short-term and long-term effects of CAD. The CAD site will be an unnatural and unmerited disturbance to the ecosystem with an undetermined timeframe, if ever for returning to its natural ecosystem balance. Short-term I worry about the disturbance to residents who will be exposed to the noise of the machinery used to dig the hole. I am concerned about the unnecessary disruption to a healthy, established ecosystem. I fear the negative impact on human health for those that swim in the water and/or consume seafood caught in the affected water. Not only during the construction period but also thereafter for possible disruptions that could agitate the CAD and stir it up enough to release the toxic materials. Long-term I fear that knowledge of an open CAD filled with toxic dredged material will decrease property values. Knowledge of this may drive people away from the area in fear of toxins in the water. How long will it take for toxins to settle into the CAD and how can we be certain they will not be disturbed and released by unforeseen events (e.g. hurricanes, heavy rain)? We already know that heavy rain stirs up bacterial and it is not safe to swim until it settles again. We need to know that heavy rains won't stir up the toxins in the deposited dredged material. Recreation will be impacted and disrupt residential life as

many will not be willing to risk exposure to the contaminated water. I would not feel comfortable letting my children or even my dog swim in water anywhere near toxic materials. I believe no one would feel safe consuming seafood from the area for fear of bioaccumulation (gradual absorption of a contaminant in an organism relative to the environment). People will fear crabs and fish living in contaminated water will absorb the toxins and be unsafe to consume. This would further pose a threat to the aquatic food chain with toxins sickening aquatic wildlife populations and the other wildlife that consume them.

The Potapsco River is a vital, natural resource for residents' quality of living and livelihood as well as habitat for wildlife. We need to protect our waterways from detrimental acts like CAD. Allowing this kind of disruption and toxic exposure will be taking multiple steps backwards in protecting our water, our people, a natural resource, and ecosystem. I understand the need to dredge for shipping, but CAD is not the proper solution and safer alternatives must be explored.

I support the CAD Task Force and believe it is imperative to establish before any further actions are taken regarding CAD. The task force should be comprised of multiple individuals with different backgrounds pertinent to CAD. It needs to be comprised of impacted residents, waterman, scientists, and experts in water quality and aquatic sediment. Independent, science-based experts will be key in maintaining neutral and strictly factual input as they have nothing to gain or lose by participating. Residents and watermen will be those directly affected by CAD and will be able to represent the unique concerns and negative impacts anticipated with CAD in our community. Membership must avoid abundance of MPA representatives and their contractors as they will ultimately have motive to pursue CAD for profit and business, but they are not the ones living in and being exposed to the disrupted area. The task force must acknowledge and consider environmental safety, human health, and potential personal concerns and impacts that CAD will create.

Sincerely,



Kelly Spencer

Riviera Beach