

Feb. 17, 2026

Theodore Weber
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TESTIMONY ON SB0431 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

**Fish and Wildlife - Endangered and Threatened Species and Migratory Birds -
Regulations, Lists, Petitions, Essential Habitats, and Takings**

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Theodore Weber

Dear Senators,

I am an ecologist, formerly with the Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources, where I developed the state Green Infrastructure Assessment, and am currently a senior scientist at an NGO working on biodiversity and climate change. I am a resident of District 30A. I am submitting this testimony in support with amendments for SB0431, Fish and Wildlife - Endangered and Threatened Species and Migratory Birds - Regulations, Lists, Petitions, Essential Habitats, and Takings.

Our planet is losing species and habitat faster than at any other time in human history. In the U.S., 34% of plant species and 40% of animal species are currently at risk of extinction, and 41% of ecosystems are at risk of range-wide collapse (NatureServe 2023). A recent poll showed that nearly all likely voters (91%) think it is important to save at-risk wildlife, fish, and plants for future generations (Data for Progress 2021).

Despite this popular support, extremists in the Trump administration and Congress have launched far-reaching attacks to eviscerate the U.S. Endangered Species Act. With prospects bleak at the federal level, SB0431 is an essential lifeline for endangered and threatened species in Maryland. I respectfully urge that you return a favorable report on it.

A few recommended amendments follow:

1. The bill needs a definition of "essential habitat," e.g., "areas containing physical and/or biological features essential to the conservation of the species both now and into the foreseeable future, as determined by the best available science."
2. § 10-2A-04(b) does not include all of the major factors threatening the viability of species; (b)(5) should include climate change, invasive species, and pollution as key examples.
3. Dedicated funding is needed to protect non-game species in Maryland, including habitat protection, restoration, law enforcement, and research. Adding this would significantly improve conservation outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Theodore Weber".

Theodore Weber

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tcweber/>

References:

Data for Progress. Poll of 1,166 likely voters taken Dec. 3-6, 2021.

NatureServe. 2023. Biodiversity in Focus: United States Edition. NatureServe, Arlington, VA.