



**SB0431 - SUPPORT**

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## **SB 0431**

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

Education, Energy, and the Environment

February 17, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee:

The Climate Communications Coalition is a Maryland-based grassroots climate and environmental justice non-profit, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Justice Coalition, and of the Maryland Climate Justice Wing, among others. The Climate Communications Coalition strongly supports SB 0431.

According to the United States Geological Survey Agency, the official tally, [only 2.67%](#) of Maryland's lands and waters are currently protected from extraction and traffic for the recovery of biodiversity and rebalancing of ecosystems processes.

In addition to supplementing protections of endangered species and migratory birds on a state level, this bill would authorize the designation of additional essential habitats for endangered and threatened species as Irreplaceable Natural Areas ("INA") which are vital for Maryland's biodiversity, environment, and public health. It must be ensured that INAs conserve existing ecosystems intact and permit natural processes to unfold unhindered. Management priorities must include biodiversity maintenance, nutrient cycling and soil formation, long-term carbon sequestration, and protection of mature and old growth forest habitats.

Increasing areas that allow natural processes to unfold through passive management and without extraction, will bring us closer to the 30% of protected lands and waters that we need to meet by 2030. Maryland currently includes lands and waters "in conservation" which are farmed, fished, logged, mined, and even allow for on and off-road traffic to state that we have surpassed 30% already. However, actively managed lands ("in conservation") are not conducive to biodiversity recovery or to rebalance ecosystem's natural processes – for this to happen we need "protected" areas, with passive management. INAs are a good start.

The Climate Communications Coalition respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 0431.

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