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## Testimony in **OPPOSITION** of HB613 – Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties – Living Shorelines and Nonstructural Shoreline Stabilization Measures

Environment & Transportation Committee  
February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **OPPOSITION OF HB613**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs.

House Bill 613 compromises and undermines Maryland State living shoreline law, which prioritizes living shorelines as the preferred method of shore protection as they trap sediment, filter pollution, and provide important aquatic, terrestrial habitat, and control shoreline erosion. This bill will create special exemptions in two state counties from generally applicable state requirements. Tailoring exemptions for specific local jurisdictions risks weakening protections designated to safeguard Maryland’s critical coastal and aquatic environments.

Shoreline erosion and stabilization decisions directly affect water quality, sedimentation rates, and habitat integrity for fish, crabs, oysters, and other wildlife. Allowing inconsistent or lower standards in two counties could increase runoff, destroy submerged vegetation, and degrade water quality — undermining long-term restoration goals for the Chesapeake Bay and local tributaries.

Special exemptions for targeted counties can lead to a piecemeal environmental policy that varies widely across the state. A patchwork of local standards makes statewide conservation goals harder to achieve and creates confusion for residents, property owners, and regulators.

This bill ignores current efforts from environmental funders, partners, state agencies, and living shoreline contractors working to perfect the living shoreline law in Maryland, including identifying appropriate exemptions to the law. Arundel Rivers strongly believes that the living shoreline waiver process should continue to be at the discretion of the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Arundel Rivers Federation recognizes that not every shoreline in Maryland is a good candidate for a living shoreline project, however having independent standards and exemptions across counties is not the right approach. For these reasons, we request an **unfavorable report** on HB613.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett  
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper  
Arundel Rivers Federation