

HOUSE BILL 1101

M3, M1

4lr1884
CF SB 653

By: **Delegates Love, Charkoudian, Foley, Fraser-Hidalgo, J. Long, Ruth, and Stewart**

Introduced and read first time: February 7, 2024

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 8, 2024

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Standing – Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings**
3 **(Clean Water Justice Act of 2024)**

4 FOR the purpose of providing certain persons ~~and associations~~ standing in certain
5 environmental and natural resources protection proceedings, ~~including proceedings~~
6 ~~arising under provisions of law relating to water quality and water resources~~
7 ~~protection, subject to certain conditions~~; authorizing certain persons that meet
8 certain standing requirements to bring certain civil actions under certain
9 circumstances; requiring a plaintiff, under certain circumstances, to give certain
10 notice and provide certain documentation to the Department of the Environment and
11 the Attorney General in a certain manner and to file a certain affidavit; authorizing
12 a court to grant certain relief, award certain costs of litigation, and impose certain
13 civil penalties in certain civil actions under certain circumstances; authorizing
14 certain persons that meet certain standing requirements to intervene in certain
15 proceedings under certain circumstances; and generally relating to standing in
16 certain environmental and natural resources protection proceedings.

17 BY adding to

18 Article – Environment

19 Section 1-901 through ~~1-905~~ 1-904 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 9. Clean
20 Water Justice Act”

21 Annotated Code of Maryland

22 (2013 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 BY repealing

2 Article – Environment

3 Section 9–344.1

4 Annotated Code of Maryland

5 (2014 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

6 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
7 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

8 **Article – Environment**

9 **SUBTITLE 9. CLEAN WATER JUSTICE ACT.**

10 **1–901.**

11 (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
12 INDICATED.

13 ~~(B) “ASSOCIATION” MEANS AN ASSOCIATION, A CORPORATION, OR ANY~~
14 ~~OTHER ORGANIZATION THAT CONSISTS OF TWO OR MORE MEMBERS JOINED BY~~
15 ~~MUTUAL CONSENT FOR A COMMON PURPOSE.~~

16 ~~(C) (B) “COSTS OF LITIGATION” INCLUDES REASONABLE ATTORNEY’S~~
17 ~~FEES, COURT COSTS, AND EXPERT WITNESS FEES, AND DOCUMENTED COSTS~~
18 ~~INCURRED IN INVESTIGATING ALLEGED VIOLATIONS.~~

19 ~~(D) (1) “INJURY IN FACT” MEANS AN INVASION OF A LEGALLY~~
20 ~~PROTECTED INTEREST THAT IS:~~

21 ~~(I) CONCRETE AND PARTICULARIZED;~~

22 ~~(II) ACTUAL OR IMMINENT; AND~~

23 ~~(III) NOT CONJECTURAL OR HYPOTHETICAL.~~

24 ~~(2) “INJURY IN FACT” INCLUDES:~~

25 ~~(I) A PROPERTY RIGHT OR PERSONAL INTEREST THAT IS~~
26 ~~DISTINCT FROM, OR SPECIFICALLY AFFECTED IN A WAY THAT IS DISTINCT FROM, A~~
27 ~~PROPERTY RIGHT OR PERSONAL INTEREST OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC; AND~~

28 ~~(II) A NEGATIVE IMPACT, OR THE THREAT OF A NEGATIVE~~
29 ~~IMPACT, TO A PERSON’S HEALTH OR TO THE USE AND ENJOYMENT OF A NATURAL~~
30 ~~RESOURCE OR ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING A NEGATIVE IMPACT TO AESTHETIC,~~

~~1 RECREATIONAL, CONSERVATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS THAT MAY BE
2 SHARED AMONG COMMUNITY MEMBERS.~~

3 (C) “EPHEMERAL STREAM” MEANS A BODY OF WATER WITH:

4 (1) A STREAM BED LOCATED ABOVE THE WATER TABLE YEAR-ROUND;

5 (2) A STREAM FLOW PRIMARILY SOURCED FROM RAINFALL RUNOFF;

6 AND

7 (3) FLOWING WATER ONLY DURING, AND FOR A SHORT DURATION
8 AFTER, PRECIPITATION EVENTS IN A TYPICAL YEAR.

9 (D) “INTERMITTENT STREAM” MEANS A BODY OF WATER WITH:

10 (1) FLOWING WATER DURING CERTAIN TIMES OF THE YEAR, WHEN
11 GROUNDWATER PROVIDES WATER FOR STREAM FLOW; AND

12 (2) A STREAM FLOW SUPPLEMENTED BY RUNOFF FROM RAINFALL.

13 (E) “POLITICAL SUBDIVISION” MEANS:

14 (1) A COUNTY;

15 (2) THE CITY OF BALTIMORE;

16 (3) A MULTICOUNTY AGENCY;

17 (4) A MUNICIPAL CORPORATION;

18 (5) A SINGLE-PURPOSE DISTRICT; OR

19 (6) ~~A SOIL CONSERVATION OR SANITARY DISTRICT.~~

20 ~~(F) “SECRETARY” MEANS THE SECRETARY OF ANY STATE AGENCY,~~
21 ~~APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.~~

22 ~~(G)~~ (F) “STANDARD” MEANS ANY REQUIREMENT, PROHIBITION,
23 LIMITATION, OR CONDITION ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE, REGULATION, PERMIT,
24 ORDER, OR LICENSE ISSUED BY A SECRETARY THE SECRETARY OR ANY OTHER
25 OFFICE OR AGENCY OF THE STATE, A LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OR A POLITICAL
26 SUBDIVISION IN ACCORDANCE WITH:

27 (1) TITLE 4, TITLE 5, SUBTITLE 9 OF THIS ARTICLE, IF THE
28 REQUIREMENT, PROHIBITION, LIMITATION, OR CONDITION IS RELATED TO

1 NONTIDAL WETLANDS THAT DO NOT HAVE A CONTINUOUS SURFACE CONNECTION TO
 2 SURFACE WATER; OR

3 (2) TITLE 9, SUBTITLE 3 ~~OR TITLE 16~~ OF THIS ARTICLE, IF THE
 4 REQUIREMENT, PROHIBITION, LIMITATION, OR CONDITION IS HYDROLOGICALLY
 5 CONNECTED TO:

6 (I) AN EPHEMERAL STREAM; OR

7 (II) AN INTERMITTENT STREAM.

8 1-902.

9 ~~(A) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN THIS~~
 10 ~~SUBSECTION SUBTITLE, A PERSON THAT MEETS THE THRESHOLD STANDING~~
 11 ~~REQUIREMENTS UNDER FEDERAL LAW HAS STANDING IN CIVIL CLAIMS ARISING~~
 12 ~~UNDER ANY STANDARD TITLE 4, TITLE 5, TITLE 9, OR TITLE 16 OF THIS ARTICLE OR~~
 13 ~~TITLE 1, SUBTITLE 3, TITLE 5, SUBTITLE 16, OR TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 18 OF THE~~
 14 ~~NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE IF THE PERSON SUFFERS AN INJURY IN FACT THAT:~~

15 ~~(I) IS FAIRLY TRACEABLE TO THE CHALLENGED ACTION OR~~
 16 ~~CONDUCT OF THE DEFENDANT; AND~~

17 ~~(II) IS LIKELY TO BE REDRESSED BY THE REQUESTED RELIEF~~
 18 ~~OR A FAVORABLE JUDICIAL DECISION.~~

19 ~~(2) AN INTEREST OR INJURY ASSERTED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL~~
 20 ~~FALL WITHIN THE ZONE OF INTERESTS SOUGHT TO BE PROTECTED BY TITLE 4,~~
 21 ~~TITLE 5, TITLE 9, OR TITLE 16 OF THIS ARTICLE AND TITLE 1, SUBTITLE 3, TITLE~~
 22 ~~5, SUBTITLE 16, OR TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 18 OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE.~~

23 ~~(B) IN ADDITION TO SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION, AN ASSOCIATION~~
 24 ~~HAS STANDING IN CLAIMS ARISING UNDER TITLE 4, TITLE 5, TITLE 9, OR TITLE 16~~
 25 ~~OF THIS ARTICLE OR TITLE 1, SUBTITLE 3, TITLE 5, SUBTITLE 16, OR TITLE 8,~~
 26 ~~SUBTITLE 18 OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE IF:~~

27 ~~(1) ONE OR MORE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION HAVE STANDING~~
 28 ~~UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION;~~

29 ~~(2) THE INTERESTS THAT THE ASSOCIATION SEEKS TO PROTECT ARE~~
 30 ~~GERMANE TO ITS PURPOSES; AND~~

31 ~~(3) NEITHER THE CLAIM ASSERTED NOR THE RELIEF REQUESTED~~
 32 ~~REQUIRES THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MEMBER.~~

1 1-903.

2 (A) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, A PERSON THAT HAS
3 STANDING UNDER § 1-902 OF THIS SUBTITLE MAY BRING A CIVIL ACTION ON THE
4 PERSON'S OWN BEHALF AGAINST ANY PERSON ~~OR GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY~~ THAT IS
5 ALLEGED TO ~~HAVE VIOLATED OR TO~~ BE IN VIOLATION OF ANY STANDARD.

6 (B) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, AN ACTION
7 MAY NOT BE BROUGHT UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION ~~AT LEAST 60 DAYS~~
8 ~~AFTER THE PLAINTIFF HAS GIVEN~~ UNLESS THE PLAINTIFF HAS FIRST BEEN GIVEN
9 60 DAYS NOTICE OF THE ALLEGED VIOLATION.

10 (2) NOTICE UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE:

11 (I) 1. BY CERTIFIED MAIL; OR

12 2. PERSONAL SERVICE; AND

13 (II) PROVIDED TO:

14 1. ~~THE APPROPRIATE SECRETARY~~ SECRETARY;

15 2. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL;

16 3. ANY LOCAL JURISDICTION IN WHICH THE ~~ALLEGED~~
17 ~~VIOLATION HAS OCCURRED~~ IS ALLEGED TO OCCUR; AND

18 4. AN ALLEGED VIOLATOR OF THE STANDARD.

19 (3) (I) AN ACTION MAY NOT BE BROUGHT UNDER SUBSECTION (A)
20 OF THIS SECTION IF THE ~~SECRETARY~~ SECRETARY HAS COMMENCED AND IS
21 DILIGENTLY PROSECUTING A CIVIL ~~OR CRIMINAL~~ ACTION ~~IN A COURT OF THE STATE~~
22 OR A CONSENT ORDER IS ENTERED TO REQUIRE COMPLIANCE FROM THE ALLEGED
23 VIOLATOR WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY OR UNREASONABLE SCHEDULES FOR
24 RETURNING TO COMPLIANCE.

25 (II) NOTWITHSTANDING SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS
26 PARAGRAPH, A PERSON THAT ~~HAS STANDING UNDER § 1-902 OF THIS SUBTITLE~~
27 MEETS THE THRESHOLD STANDING REQUIREMENTS UNDER FEDERAL LAW MAY
28 INTERVENE IN ~~THE~~ A CIVIL ACTION BROUGHT BY THE ~~SECRETARY~~ SECRETARY
29 UNDER:

30 1. TITLE 5, SUBTITLE 9 OF THIS ARTICLE; OR

1 **2. TITLE 9, SUBTITLE 3 OF THIS ARTICLE.**

2 **(4) NOTICE UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL IDENTIFY:**

3 **(I) A STANDARD VIOLATED;**

4 **(II) AN ACTIVITY CONSTITUTING THE VIOLATION;**

5 **(III) A PERSON SUSPECTED OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE**
6 **VIOLATION;**

7 **(IV) THE LOCATION OF THE VIOLATION;**

8 **(V) THE DATES OF VIOLATIONS IF KNOWN; AND**

9 **(VI) THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE PERSON GIVING NOTICE.**

10 **(C) AN ACTION BROUGHT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION SHALL BE**
11 **BROUGHT IN ANY CIRCUIT COURT OF A COUNTY WHERE THE ~~ALLEGED~~ CONDITION,**
12 **ACTIVITY, OR FAILURE ~~IS OCCURRING, HAS OCCURRED, OR IS LIKELY TO OCCUR~~ IS**
13 **ALLEGED TO BE A VIOLATION OF A STANDARD.**

14 **(D) BEFORE THE ENTERING OF ANY CONSENT JUDGMENT TO WHICH THE**
15 **DEPARTMENT IS NOT A PARTY OR BEFORE THE DISMISSAL OF ANY CASE FILED IN**
16 **ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SUBTITLE SUBJECT TO A SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT, THE**
17 **PLAINTIFF SHALL:**

18 **(1) GIVE NOTICE AND PROVIDE A COMPLETE AND UNREDACTED COPY**
19 **OF THE PROPOSED CONSENT JUDGMENT OR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT TO THE**
20 **DEPARTMENT AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL BY PERSONAL SERVICE OR CERTIFIED**
21 **MAIL AT LEAST 45 DAYS BEFORE THE DATE THAT THE PROPOSED CONSENT**
22 **JUDGMENT OR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT IS FILED WITH THE COURT; AND**

23 **(2) FILE AN AFFIDAVIT WITH THE COURT UNDER PENALTY OF**
24 **PERJURY INDICATING COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENT UNDER ITEM (1) OF**
25 **THIS SUBSECTION.**

26 **(E) A COURT MAY:**

27 **(1) ORDER THE ENFORCEMENT OF A STANDARD ~~CHALLENGED~~**
28 **UNDER THIS SECTION; AND**

29 **(2) GRANT:**

1 (I) TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT EQUITABLE RELIEF; OR

2 (II) ~~ANY EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE PROVIDED BY THIS SUBTITLE,~~
3 ~~ANY OTHER RELIEF PROVIDED UNDER A STATUTE CHALLENGED UNDER THIS~~
4 ~~SECTION STANDARD; AND~~

5 ~~(3) IMPOSE CONDITIONS ON A DEFENDANT TO REQUIRE THE~~
6 ~~PROTECTION OF LAND, AIR, WATER, AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES OR PUBLIC~~
7 ~~HEALTH FROM POLLUTION, IMPAIRMENT, OR DESTRUCTION.~~

8 ~~(E)~~ ~~(F)~~ (F) IN AN ACTION UNDER THIS SECTION, THE COURT MAY
9 AWARD THE COSTS OF LITIGATION TO:

10 ~~(H)~~ (1) A PREVAILING PLAINTIFF; OR

11 ~~(H)~~ (2) A SUBSTANTIALLY PREVAILING PLAINTIFF; OR

12 (3) A SUBSTANTIALLY PREVAILING DEFENDANT IF THE PLAINTIFF'S
13 CLAIM WAS FRIVOLOUS, UNREASONABLE, OR GROUNDLESS. IF THE PLAINTIFF HAS:

14 ~~1. PARTICIPATED IN AN ACTION TO ENFORCE A~~
15 ~~VIOLATION FOLLOWING THE ISSUANCE OF NOTICE UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS~~
16 ~~SECTION; AND~~

17 ~~2. A. SUCCESSFULLY ESTABLISHED THE LIABILITY~~
18 ~~OF A DEFENDANT IN FEWER THAN ALL OF THE ASSERTED CLAIMS; OR~~

19 ~~B. OTHERWISE ADVANCED THE PURPOSE OF THE~~
20 ~~RELEVANT STATUTES THROUGH THE OUTCOME OF THE ACTION BY IMPROVING~~
21 ~~ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH, OR REDUCING~~
22 ~~POLLUTION.~~

23 ~~(2) IF A PARTY TO AN ACTION UNDER THIS SECTION ACTS IN BAD~~
24 ~~FAITH OR WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL JUSTIFICATION IN MAINTAINING OR DEFENDING~~
25 ~~THE ACTION, THE COURT MAY AWARD TO THE ADVERSE PARTY THE COSTS OF~~
26 ~~LITIGATION.~~

27 ~~(F)~~ (G) (1) (I) A EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS
28 SUBSECTION, A COURT MAY IMPOSE A CIVIL PENALTY AUTHORIZED IN ACCORDANCE
29 WITH THE STATUTE UNDER WHICH AN ACTION IS BROUGHT UNDER THIS SECTION.

30 (II) ~~INSTEAD OF IMPOSING A CIVIL PENALTY UNDER~~
31 ~~SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, A A COURT MAY ORDER APPROVE A~~

1 CONSENT JUDGMENT OR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT
 2 INCLUDES A SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT.

3 (2) ~~SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A~~ A CIVIL
 4 PENALTY COLLECTED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE DEPOSITED IN A MANNER
 5 SPECIFIED BY THE STATUTE.

6 (3) ~~IF THE ENFORCEMENT OF A STATUTORY DUTY HAS BEEN~~
 7 ~~DELEGATED TO A LOCAL GOVERNMENT, UP TO 50% OF A CIVIL PENALTY COLLECTED~~
 8 ~~UNDER THIS SUBSECTION MAY BE AWARDED TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT~~ THE
 9 STATE MAY NOT BE HELD LIABLE FOR CIVIL PENALTIES IN ANY ACTION UNDER THIS
 10 SUBTITLE.

11 1-904.

12 (A) (1) ~~THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO § 1-903(B)(3) OF THIS~~
 13 ~~SUBTITLE.~~

14 ~~(B)~~ A SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A PERSON THAT
 15 HAS STANDING UNDER § 1-902 OF THIS SUBTITLE MAY HAS THE UNCONDITIONAL
 16 RIGHT AND THE AUTHORITY TO INTERVENE AS A MATTER OF RIGHT IN AN A CIVIL
 17 ACTION ARISING UNDER TITLE 4, TITLE 5, TITLE 9, OR TITLE 16 OF THIS ARTICLE
 18 OR TITLE 1, SUBTITLE 3, TITLE 5, SUBTITLE 16, OR TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 18 OF THE
 19 NATURAL RESOURCES ARTICLE, UNLESS A DEFENDANT DEMONSTRATES THAT THE
 20 PERSON'S INTEREST IS ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED BY EXISTING PARTIES ANY
 21 STANDARD.

22 (2) A PERSON SHALL EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO INTERVENE UNDER
 23 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE APPLICABLE
 24 PRACTICES, PROCEDURES, AND LAWS IN THE STATE.

25 (3) A PERSON THAT HAS STANDING TO INTERVENE UNDER § 1-902 OF
 26 THIS SUBTITLE HAS THE SAME RIGHTS AS AN INTERESTED PERSON OR AGGRIEVED
 27 PARTY UNDER THE FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT.

28 ~~(C)~~ (B) THE STATE MAY INTERVENE AS A MATTER OF RIGHT AT ANY TIME
 29 IN A ANY PROCEEDING BROUGHT UNDER THIS SUBTITLE.

30 ~~(D)~~ ~~NOTWITHSTANDING § 1-903(B)(3) OF THIS SUBTITLE AND SUBSECTION~~
 31 ~~(A) OF THIS SECTION, A COURT MAY GRANT INTERVENTION ON MOTION BY ANY~~
 32 ~~PARTY.~~

33 1-905.

~~THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBTITLE SUPERSEDE ANY INCONSISTENT PROVISION OF ANY STATE, COUNTY, OR MUNICIPAL LAW, ORDINANCE, OR REGULATION AND ANY JUDICIAL INTERPRETATION TO THE EXTENT OF THE INCONSISTENCY.~~

[9-344.1.

(a) Subject to subsection (b) of this section, a person who meets the threshold standing requirements under the federal Clean Water Act has an unconditional right and the authority to intervene in a civil action that the State initiates in State court to require compliance with:

(1) This subtitle;

(2) Regulations adopted by the Department in accordance with this subtitle; or

(3) Any discharge permit, effluent limitation, or order issued by the Department in accordance with this subtitle.

(b) A person shall exercise the right to intervene under subsection (a) of this section in accordance with the applicable practices, procedures, and laws in the State.

(c) A person who meets the requirements to intervene under subsection (a) of this section has the same rights as an interested person or aggrieved party under the federal Clean Water Act, including the right to apply for judicial appeal.]

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, if any provision of this Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any reason in a court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or any other application of this Act that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and for this purpose the provisions of this Act are declared severable.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That it is the intent of the General Assembly that this Act:

(1) provide certain remedies to abate the pollution, destruction, or substantial or unreasonable impairment to the public health, water quality, or any other natural resource of the State;

(2) may not abridge or alter any right of action or remedies that exist under law; and

(3) may not be construed as stopping or limiting the State or any person in the exercise of the right to:

- 1 (i) protect the natural resources of the State;
- 2 (ii) suppress nuisances; or
- 3 (iii) abate pollution.

4 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
 5 October 1, 2024.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.