



**SB0299 : Department of General Services - Energy-Conserving Standards
(Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2020)**

Position: Support: SB 0299

**The Maryland Senate
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) asks that that you support SB299 and respectfully submits this information for your consideration. It is estimated that up to a billion birds a year die in collisions with glass on buildings and other structures. While birds face many threats to their survival, it is important to note that the dramatic increase in the use of glass as a building material need not pose the unsustainable threat to birdlife that it currently does. We can use glass and still help our migrating and resident birds be able to navigate safely in and through our state. We can also conserve against unnecessary energy waste at the same time, the original intent of many of the features in LEED Credit 55, when incorporated into building specifications that simply yield a better building.

Of the four major migration flyways, Maryland sits in a vital position along the Atlantic Flyway. Our State bird, the Baltimore Oriole, is one such migrant that returns yearly to breed and departs in Fall for wintering grounds in Central and South America. It is also a frequent victim of collisions with the increasing glass that has become trendy in our state. Many, otherwise successful fledgling young of the year, will also perish in what would have been their first migration as they become confused by glass. Indeed, according to the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership (MBCP), "Maryland (has) features that support an impressive diversity of ecosystems, habitats, and species...(and) due to a variety of threats, some 143 species of birds have been recognized as 'Species of Greatest Conservation Need'". The MBCP further notes that, "Over 200 species of birds breed in Maryland, more than half of which are considered to be Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Many species that breed in the state migrate to other areas outside of breeding season, (and) given the mobility of birds, planning at the landscape level and considering species needs during their full life cycle is important. (Further), working with a variety of partners will be critical to minimize mortality due to collisions."

While many factors challenge birds, perhaps none is as immediately fatal and artificial as a collision with glass. Birds have evolved to make decisions at flight speed and given the chance to avoid an object they can see, make quick decisions to do so. The air is their habitat. It is noteworthy that people cannot see glass and frequently walk into glass doors and other objects unless an added feature alerts them to its presence. We can also alert birds to the presence of glass and for many reasons, it is incumbent upon us to do so.

“The diversity of bird species and their habitats is under increasing threat. Unless concerted efforts are taken in the near future Maryland will lose some of its greatest assets – healthy natural systems and the wide range of birds, plants, and other wildlife that they support. Maryland risks economic impact as well as a decrease in quality of life. An estimated 900,000 residents and non-residents enjoy birding in the state. While Marylanders generated \$483 million from wildlife-watching activities in 2011, the Total Industrial Output (TIO), which includes, direct, indirect, and induced effects, totaled over \$909 million, produced 10,807 full- and part-time jobs, and generated \$88.4 million in state and local tax revenue. Nationally, Americans who watch and feed birds contribute \$41 billion to the nation’s economy every year.¹

Birds provide invaluable ecological services in areas of pest control, seed dispersal, and pollination. The immediate threats to their survival and a disruption to our symbiotic relationship with them are matters of great importance for a variety of reasons. In our history it took people shooting them out of the sky at a faster rate than they could reproduce, in our modern times the same affect can be achieved by continuing to erect glass buildings and failing to incorporate reasonable measures to help them see and avoid colliding with it. Both scenarios are directly responsible for removing birds at a faster rate than they can reproduce to sustain losses of this magnitude.

Sustainable growth in Maryland is very important and incorporating reasonable features to conserve energy, conserve financial resources, and address an unsustainable loss of bird life benefits current and future residents of our state. We therefore ask you to support and pass the Maryland Sustainable Building Act of 2020 (SB299).

MOS is a Maryland-based volunteer organization of some 1,800 members, with 15 chapters in Maryland. We are devoted to the study and preservation of birds and their habitat.

Sincerely,

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¹ US Fish and Wildlife Service, Economic Impact: Birds, Birdwatching and the U.S. Economy, November 16, 2017, <https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/bird-watching/valuing-birds.php>