

TO: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Lani Hummel

RE: HB 236 Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act

POSITION: SUPPORT

I have been a bird lover for nearly 60 years. I am very concerned about the loss of large numbers and diversity of birds in my lifetime. More specifically, North America has lost 20% of its bird populations since 1970. This amounts to 3 billion birds. Given this drastic decline, it is very disturbing to learn that window collisions now kill an estimated 1 billion birds in North America each year.

The good news is that most of these deaths are preventable. There are many cost-neutral solutions that can be implemented in the design phase to make buildings more visible to birds. These same features can also make buildings more sustainable, conserving energy by decreasing solar heat gain and glare in the summer and maintaining heat in the winter.

Birds are important to humans for a variety of reasons. They pollinate, disperse seeds, and provide pest control. For example, they help farmers save money by using fewer chemicals while producing a greater crop yield that would otherwise be lost to pests.

Birds are also great dispersers of seeds. For instance, Blue Jays bury 3,000 – 5,000 acorns in a single season, far more than they can eat. Some of these acorns will germinate and sprout into new oak trees. Because the Jays fly a considerable distance away from their nest to bury their acorns, they regenerate forests in some areas and start new forests in others. This is of growing importance in a landscape of increasingly isolated fragments of woodlands. As we spend more and more money to plant trees to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, we should appreciate the economic value of the ecosystem services provided by Blue Jays.

Birds offer other benefits to the economy. They are important to tourism. Many people vacation in Maryland to enjoy bird watching. This contributes more than \$300 million to the state economy and provides many opportunities for employment.

In summary, bird-friendly design will protect birds and save energy. For these reasons, I respectfully request a FAVORABLE report from the Committee on HB 236.

Thank you for your consideration.