



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1114- ILLEGAL DUMPING AND LITTER CONTROL LAW
– YARD WASTE – DISPOSAL ON HIGHWAYS**

To be heard by Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee on
February 25, 2021

ShoreRivers and the undersigned organizations respectfully request a **favorable report on House Bill 1114.**

HB1114 will (1) simply add leaf litter and yard waste to existing litter laws, (2) establish penalties for violations of this law, and (3) require that anyone found guilty of violating this law be responsible for reimbursing the county or entity that had to remedy the improperly disposed of debris.

In the Chesapeake Bay, our waterways are choked with excess nutrients – namely nitrogen and phosphorus - that contribute to harmful algal blooms, dead zones, and severely degraded water quality. **A study conducted by the United State Geological Survey in 2016 found that 56% of the phosphorus in urban stormwater annually comes from leaf litter and yard waste that is improperly disposed of.** This study found that if leaf litter and yard waste were properly managed and picked up in a timely manner, phosphorus loads could be reduced by up to 80% annually.

Leaf litter needs to be better managed as thousands of species of native pollinators, insects, reptiles, and amphibians depend on this leaf litter for their survival and reproduction. When this leaf litter is dumped on roadways, in waterways, or not picked up by the local jurisdictions, it does not provide this crucial habitat benefit and these thousands of species suffer. There are several more sustainable alternatives that protect water quality and habitat value, including mulching the leaves, creating brush piles at the edges of properties, or simply leaving the leaves where they fall. Since this leaf litter is so nutrient-rich, it makes an excellent natural fertilizer for gardens and lawns as well.

Finally, improperly disposed of leaf litter and yard waste present a safety concern on roadways and in waterways. Wet leaves in particular present a hazard to motorcyclists, joggers, and bicyclists. This debris can clog outboard water intakes, and damage propellers and hulls of boats as well when dumped into waterways. By properly managing this yard waste, it will ensure that local community members are better protected as well.

Healthy rivers and streams are an integral part of our lives in Maryland. Our ecosystems, outdoor recreation, and economy depend on clean water. **This simple legislation will help ensure that our waterways, communities, and habitats are better protected.**

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB1114.

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Sassafras Riverkeeper
ShoreRivers

Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Arundel Rivers Federation
Maryland Conservation Council

Maryland WISE Women
Maryland League of
Conservation Voters