



Testimony in Support of House Bill 322 – Restrictions on Use - Low Impact Landscaping

January 19th, 2021

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony **in support of HB322 - designed to restrict Homeowner Associations (HOAs) from imposing unreasonable limitations on low-impact landscaping** - on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with 3,500 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration and education.

On the Eastern Shore, every drop of water from a residential home, riparian or otherwise, is carried to our rivers. This runoff is carrying excess nutrients from lawn fertilizers, air pollutants from gas operated vehicles and tools, as well particulates from harmful household chemicals. We are learning that stitching together small habitats such as rain and pollinator gardens into conservation corridors may make the essential difference we need for all species, including our own, to thrive. Low impact landscapes help to absorb these harmful pollutants, sequester carbon from the atmosphere, and hold sediment in place- reducing the cumulative effects of sediment erosion in the Chesapeake. The native plants and flowers encourage pollinators to thrive, ensuring more wild plant growth and bio-diversity is achieved. **This is a concrete, achievable way for homeowners to contribute to Chesapeake water quality restoration efforts.** Citizens should not be deterred from powerful initiatives such as this by their HOA simply because it does not achieve a specific or traditional aesthetic.

Restricting Homeowner Associations from imposing unreasonable limitations on low- impact landscaping will allow individuals to break with traditional grass lawns that dominate many developments, and **offer homeowners the opportunity to plant strategic gardens that promote pollinators, sequester carbon and air pollution, and reduce stormwater runoff headed for the tributaries of the Chesapeake, benefiting both human and environmental health.** ShoreRivers continues to advocate for river and Bay-friendly yards as a simple technique for individuals to make a cumulative positive impact on our waterways, and we will support any legislation that makes it easier and more advantageous for citizens to take these important first steps. For this reason and the examples described above, ShoreRivers urges the committee to adopt **House Bill 322.**

Sincerely,
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
Elle Bassett, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

Main Office
114 S. Washington St.
Suite 301
Easton, MD 21601
443.385.0511

Regional Office
111A North Main St.
Galena, MD 21635
410.810.7556

shorerivers.org

Regional Office
207 S. Water St.
Unit B
Chestertown, MD 21620
410.810.7556