

DANA M. STEIN  
Legislative District 11  
Baltimore County

Vice Chair  
Environment and Transportation  
Committee

Subcommittees  
Chair, Environment  
Natural Resources,  
Agriculture and Open Space



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 251  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3527 · 301-858-3527  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3527  
Fax 410-841-3509 · 301-858-3509  
Dana.Stein@house.state.md.us

## *The Maryland House of Delegates*

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Support of HB 784**

#### **Department of Natural Resources – Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program - Establishment**

Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

This legislation would establish the Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program. It is another step forward in protecting the critical **HABITAT** of Maryland's rarest species, but **only** on public lands managed by the DNR.

Around the world, one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades. This extinction is not only happening in tropical rainforests but is happening in Maryland. For example, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in the final stages of review to declare the Maryland Darter extinct. The darter was the only vertebrate animal unique to Maryland. Failing to protect our unique habitats will result in further biodiversity loss and extinction of the species vital to our ecosystem.

That is why House Bill 784 focuses on the protection of the habitat of species. DNR currently has regulatory authority to protect threatened and endangered species but not their habitats.

This bill would protect what are called irreplaceable natural areas – the last few biologically unique places where threatened and endangered species still hang on. Once these areas are lost, we can never replace them.

The bill requires DNR to designate these areas by mid-2023, including maps of each, unique features and threats to each, and compatible uses. DNR has documented the general locations of these rare species and are shown on their Bio-Net GIS Maps.

House Bill 784 will give the Department of Natural Resources a much-needed regulatory tool to protect irreplaceable natural areas which, once lost, are lost forever.

I request a favorable report on this legislation.