



Maryland Office
2901 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
Tel: 410-558-2473
md.audubon.org

March 22, 2022

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

Re: HB 784 Department of Natural Resources - Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program Act of 2022

Position: Favorable

Honorable Members of the Health, Education and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Audubon Mid-Atlantic strongly supports the Senate companion bill to HB 784, Department of Natural Resources - Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program – Establishment. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is a regional office of the National Audubon Society with more than 35,000 members in Maryland. Our mission is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation.

Maryland supports an impressive diversity of natural environments and has often been referred to as “America in Miniature.” However, many of the best examples of natural areas are threatened with outright loss or degradation by a range of human activities and also by climate change. The loss and degradation of natural habitats is one of the greatest threats to biodiversity, both globally and here in Maryland. Audubon works closely with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to identify and safeguard sites of high conservation for birds, including a network of Important Bird Areas across the state, part of a global network of such sites coordinated by Birdlife International.

The Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program proposed by this bill would expand the ability of Maryland Department of Natural Resources to protect the state’s threatened and endangered species and also the unique habitats on which these species depend. The species most in need of conservation tend to be those that specialize in particular environments, and such environments are often those that are the most vulnerable to changes caused by a range of human activities. This bill will enable Maryland to not only protect, but also to safeguard, through proper management, these most vulnerable of natural places, and thus preserve the full array of biodiversity in the state for future generations.

Audubon applauds the introduction of this bill and is pleased to give it strong support.

Jim Brown

Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Policy Director

David Curson

Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Director of Conservation