



Testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB876– Maryland Forestry Education Fund

March 4, 2022

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB876** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with over 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

The Eastern Shore is one of the least treed areas in Maryland due to agricultural land use. **At ShoreRivers, we know that large stands of trees are critical for water quality and runoff pollution mitigation.** As the Chester Riverkeeper, I work with local counties to protect what mature forests exist in the Chester's watershed, with an understanding that the positive effects for water health are not the only benefits forests can bring to a community and its economy when done sustainably.

This bill will increase education and support for district forestry boards and landowners for healthy forest management, ecological service markets, emerging forest threats, climate science, forest conservation, urban forestry, sustainable science, forestry policy and best practices. It will also provide small grants for landowners to trial innovative best practices on their forest lands.

We support this bill for increased forestry education and resources because trees are one of the most positive long-term investments that can be made to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, and many of our trees are threatened by the ongoing effects of climate change, as well as development activities within our watersheds. By educating our counties and our communities on the importance and value of our mature forests, and by connecting individuals with the resources to better steward privately owned forests, we can increase our chances of protecting and increasing forest canopy across our region.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB876**.

Sincerely,

Annie Richards

Chester Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

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