



Testimony in **OPPOSITION** of HB1313 – EXECPTION TO NONSTRUCTURAL SHORELINE STABILIZATION REQUIREMENTS

House Environment and Transportation Committee

March 9, 2022

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **OPPOSITION** of **HB1313** 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.

In 2008, the Maryland Legislature passed the Living Shoreline Protection Act, requiring shoreline property owners to use natural solutions to prevent erosion if feasible. HB1313 will allow marine contractors to provide exceptions to this requirement, effectively undoing the good that was done through the Living Shoreline Protection Act.

Living shorelines are projects that protect, restore, enhance, and or create natural shoreline habitat. They provide many co-benefits including protecting properties at risk of erosion, providing spawning and upland habitat, improving water quality by filtering pollution, minimizing storm surge and wave energy, and adapting land to sea level rise. Alternatively, structural shoreline practices do not provide any ecological benefits such as additional habitat or water quality improvements, nor do they absorb wave energy and storm surge. **Living shorelines better prepare our state for climate change and sea level rise and are therefore rightfully prioritized over structural stabilization practices such as bulkheads or riprap.**

The Maryland Department of the Environment currently has a Living Shoreline Waiver for any property owners that have shoreline mapped in an area appropriate for structural shoreline stabilization measures or if the project site is not suitable for a living shoreline due to high energy, extreme depths, or lack of space. Considering this waiver exists and is controlled by Department experts, giving this ability to marine contractors is unnecessary. If a marine contractor feels that a living shoreline is not feasible at a property, the homeowner can apply for a waiver through the Department.

HB1313 undermines the Living Shoreline Protect Act and creates redundancies in considering exemptions from the living shoreline requirement in the state. Criteria for obtaining a living shoreline waiver should remain at the discretion of the Department of the Environment to ensure that Maryland residents are doing all that we can to be more resilient, improve water quality, and protect, restore, and enhance our shorelines.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt an **UNFAVORABLE** report on **HB1313**.

Sincerely,

Elle Bassett
Miles-Wye Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

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