



**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB869- WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS PROGRAM -
AUTHORIZATIONS FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PROJECTS**

February 25, 2022

Environment and Transportation Committee

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT of HB869** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a watershed 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.

HB869 will improve and streamline the permit review process for voluntary restoration work by creating a separate process from projects that are required for mitigation. By having this specific review process for restoration projects, it will allow these critical projects to be implemented in a much quicker and cost-efficient manner, which in turn means that the nutrient reductions from these projects will start much sooner. **As we continue to deal with the increasing impacts of climate change throughout the state of Maryland, and particularly on the Eastern Shore, this streamlined process will allow organizations like ShoreRivers to implement broad-scale restoration work that helps improve our local resilience to climate change and other adverse impacts.**

Current permitting requirements are set up for development projects instead of the holistic restoration of an ecosystem. The work that ShoreRivers and other practitioners do for voluntary, beneficial restoration - stream restorations, treatment wetlands, etc. - falls under this stringent and complicated permitting that takes many months, often up to a year, to complete. **A streamlined process for voluntary & beneficial Chesapeake Bay restoration work will allow fully funded restoration projects to be installed in a timelier manner.**

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB869**.

Sincerely,

Zack Kelleher
Sassafras Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

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