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March 6, 2023

To: Maryland House Economic Matters Committee
From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Subject: Favorable Testimony for **Maryland HB793 POWER Act**

Good afternoon. My name is Jim Brown. I am the policy director for Audubon Mid-Atlantic, here in Maryland. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic supports the Power Act. HB793 will protect birds from the impacts of climate change. Adopting renewable energy is critical to reducing pollution, lowering temperatures, and preserving the places that birds need to survive. Audubon supports renewable energy—including offshore wind—that is properly sited in ways that avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts on birds and other wildlife.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and climate change. 1/3 of eastern forest and grassland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. Iconic birds such as the Wood Thrush, American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark and Baltimore Oriole are in decline across Maryland. On the Eastern Shore the endangered salt marsh sparrow is losing critical habitat each year due to climate related sea-level rise. HB793 will slow and reverse this trend by encouraging a transition to non-greenhouse gas energy production in Maryland.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic appreciates that this bill acknowledges the need to work with the Federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). BOEM provides wildlife specific research with relevant agencies and considers comments from partners to minimize risk to birds. The bill also addresses need to upgrade Maryland's utility grid capacity to accommodate offshore wind. Audubon Mid-Atlantic sees this as an opportunity to be proactive and thoughtful in planning for a grid that minimizes impacts to bird habitat.

The Science tells us:

- Greenhouse gas induced climate change is the most significant threat to birds and people in Maryland
- Transitioning to renewable energy sources such as wind will mitigate and slow the impacts of climate change on our vulnerable human and bird communities.

- When proper siting considerations are followed, offshore wind turbines minimize threats to birds and other wildlife

With proper siting considerations HB793 will protect birds by creating a more resilient environment. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in climate action, helping the state reach the ambitious goals established in Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Jim Brown

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