



Testimony in OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 775 – Private Wetlands - Structural Shoreline Stabilization Measures - Authorization

February 22, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in opposition to SB775**, on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

At ShoreRivers, shoreline erosion is one of the most common reasons a community member reaches out for consultation from a Riverkeeper. Almost always, we recommend living shorelines as the most beneficial solution, both for the homeowner and for the health of the waterway. However, the cost of implementation is incredibly high due to fuel prices and the labor required to walk a project through the permitting process. As a result, many homeowners seek waivers to implement armored shorelines instead.

SB775 provides a pro forma waiver for armoring up to 10% of a shoreline. On the Eastern Shore, where it is not uncommon for private waterfronts to stretch thousands of feet, 10% represents a significant amount of shoreline. **To legislatively allow 10% without any agency review will incentivize the implementation of hardened shorelines on properties where a waiver would have been required in the past. Living shorelines are the gold standard for shoreline restoration, and this bill will move Maryland further away from its goal of incentivizing them.**

A recent study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration identifies that within a 1,000-foot shoreline, if 30% or greater is armored, there will be negative impacts on fish reproduction—a detriment to the biodiversity of the Chesapeake and to our local fishing economies. Additionally, as impacts of climate change increase, rising tides will spill over bulkheads and riprap, causing them to degrade and collapse. On the low-lying Eastern Shore, it is imperative that we implement the most resilient and dynamic shorelines to protect our communities.

Living shorelines provide important habitat to estuarian life found in the Chesapeake, as well as protection from flooding and runoff—these benefits far outweigh anything provided by armored alternatives. For these reasons, we urge the committee to adopt an unfavorable report, for SB775.

Sincerely,

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper on behalf of ShoreRivers

ShoreRivers

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