



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office of Crime
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Samuel Desai, *Chair*
Emily Shrieves, *Vice-Chair*
Henry Meiser, *Secretary*

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St, Annapolis, MD 21401
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB775 | Private Wetlands - Structural Shoreline Stabilization Measures - Authorization

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Feldman,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

Upwards of 7,000 miles of Maryland shorelines are shared by the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, Potomac River, and the Atlantic Ocean. However, 70% of the coast is eroding, and these waters claim 580 acres annually.¹ Erosion has significantly reduced land and sediment, and with such sweeping shores, our state is highly vulnerable to hurricanes and rising water levels. But our bay waters are already rising due to climate change: the relative water level has increased one foot in the Chesapeake Bay— nearly twice the global average. This sea level could rise an additional 1.3 feet to 5.2 feet by the end of the 21st century.² Since so much of the land on the Eastern Shore and the larger Chesapeake region lies near sea level, this rise would cause a huge impact.

Maryland's land has rapidly sunk beneath these increasing levels, and the sensitive marsh plants and other wildlife cannot survive the encroaching waters. We have seen this through the hundreds of islands that have disappeared. In 1910, Holland Island housed just over 300 Dorchester County residents.³ One of the largest inhabited islands of the Chesapeake Bay, watermen moved to the location in droves for its fishing

¹ Maryland Department of the Environment, “Shore Erosion Control Guidelines” (2008), <https://dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/Publication/Shoreerostext.pdf>.

² The Conservation Fund, “Climate Change and the Chesapeake Bay” (2023), <https://www.conservationfund.org/projects/climate-change-and-the-chesapeake-bay/>

³ HuffPost, “Holland Island Home in Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay Photographed Right Before It Collapsed (PHOTO)” (2013), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/holland-island-home-chesapeake-bay_n_3875899

opportunities and seafood commercialism. However, by 1914, the wind and tides eroded the silt to where occupants led a mass exodus from the island. Less than 100 years later, in 2010, the last house finally collapsed.⁴ The balance between the bay and humans who live around it has existed for thousands of years, but climate change may result in another widespread migration from coastal areas.

Still, the question remains: will these communities migrate from the coast, or will we build up and resist? By prioritizing natural and synthetic materials, we will aid communities in becoming more resilient to water level rise.

SB775 requires that structural shoreline stabilization measures be installed on private wetlands. This bill will help to protect and stabilize our coastlines from developments resulting from climate change. The council voted in favor of **SB775** as it correlates with the Council’s 2023 legislative priorities supporting:

- a) Systemic regulations to mitigate climate change (Article III, Section Ab.), and
- b) Reducing economic inequality (Article III, Section C).

For these reasons, the Council supports **SB775** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,



Samuel Desai, Chair
of Maryland Youth Advisory Council

⁴ The Baltimore Sun, “Holland Island house collapse ‘end of an era’” (2010),
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/features/green/bs-gr-bay-vanishing-island-20101022,0.6319144.story>