

Testimony of  
Anne Lewis, FAIA  
President, City Wildlife, Inc.  
in support of the  
Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2023 – SB92 and HB6  
MD General Assembly  
February, 2023

**City Wildlife is pleased to have this opportunity to submit favorable testimony in support of the Maryland Sustainable Buildings Act of 2023.**

City Wildlife is a non-profit organization in the District of Columbia that has run the city's *Lights Out DC* program for twelve years. Volunteers for this program monitor glass buildings in part of the downtown area and collect the dead and injured birds they find at these buildings. Since 2010, we have documented more than 4,500 bird strikes in just this small downtown area. 85% of these collisions were fatal, and these numbers are increasing every year as more and more glass buildings are built.



Some victims of bird/glass collisions 2021  
City Wildlife, Inc.

**Nationally, up to one billion birds are killed each year in glass collisions.**

The victims of these collisions are mostly neo-tropical migrants -- beautiful birds -- many of whose populations are in serious decline. Since 1970, North America has lost 29% of its breeding birds, and bird/glass collisions are one of the most significant sources of fatality for these valued and dwindling species. DC and Maryland are on the Atlantic Flyway for migrating birds, so our buildings need to be especially bird-safe. But unfortunately, they are not, and thousands of birds are being killed in our region every year.

**Many jurisdictions have already passed laws mandating bird-safe design. Maryland lags behind.** New York City's Local Law 15, passed in 2020, requires most new buildings -- and any existing building that is replacing all of its exterior glass -- to be bird-safe. In December of 2022, the DC Council unanimously passed a similar law for the District of Columbia. If approved by Congress, the District's law will take effect on October 1, 2024. Other jurisdictions already have bird-safe laws on the books, including San Francisco, Portland, Toronto, and the states of Illinois and Minnesota. Also, the US House of Representatives has introduced a law requiring GSA's federal buildings to be bird-safe.

**It is time for Maryland to follow suit and pass its Sustainable Buildings Act.**

**The techniques to prevent bird/glass collisions are well-known, and bird-safe design is not expensive.** Adding bird-safe glass to a project generally adds only one-tenth to one-half of one percent to the overall construction cost, and ample studies to prove its effectiveness.

**In addition, bird-safe measures can significantly reduce energy costs through lighting reductions and reduced heating and cooling costs.** The DC Court of Appeals has reduced its atrium lighting costs by 15% -- and the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building by 28% -- just by dimming their atrium lights to save birds.

**Bird-safe design is effective.** In 2016, one of DC's problem buildings, the Washington Convention Center, installed bird-safe film at its L Street overpass, a feature that was killing many birds. The results have been dramatic: to date, we have seen an 85% reduction in bird strikes at this overpass. What's more, the film is nearly invisible. But it is always less expensive to construct a bird-safe building at the outset than to retrofit one.

**These bird strikes take a human toll.** In the spring of 2018 at a DC elementary school, 53 Cedar Waxwings collided with glass along a corridor over a period of several days. The teachers said the children were so traumatized that they had to be kept away from the corridor because it upset them too much to see the birds hitting the glass and dying on the ground. Many adults, too, have described how disturbing it is to see a bird hit a window -- an all-too-common experience that can make people dread coming to work. Bird-safe design can greatly reduce these sad events.

**We are thrilled that Maryland is considering this legislation and strongly support its passage.** Establishing requirements for state-owned or operated buildings will be highly effective, setting an important and highly visible standard for private construction to follow.

I am pleased to have been able to write in support of this legislation would be glad to provide any information that might be helpful about our bird-collision data or experiences.

Respectfully submitted,  
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