



March 7, 2023

Chair Brian J. Feldman
Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

Re: Earthjustice **support** of SB 611: Office of the Attorney General –
Environment and Natural Resources Monitoring Unit - Establishment

Earthjustice¹ strongly supports the passage of SB 611. SB 611 would establish the Environment and Natural Resources Monitoring Unit in the Office of the Attorney General. This unit would investigate and prosecute cases against persons that violate State criminal environmental and natural resources laws and to assist the Department of the Environment and the Department of Natural Resources in investigating or bringing a civil action regarding a violation of State civil environmental and natural resources laws.

For many decades, the Maryland General Assembly has passed strong environmental and natural resources laws designed to protect the health of Marylanders and Maryland’s unique environmental treasures. These laws provide the vision, scope, and authority for environmental protection and restoration. Unfortunately, no law is self-implementing. Experience with environmental protections and programs demonstrates that enforcement is essential to compliance because many people, businesses and institutions will not comply with the laws unless there are clear consequences for noncompliance. Environmental enforcement is the vital set of actions that Maryland must take to achieve full implementation of environmental requirements (compliance) and to correct or halt situations or activities that endanger the environment or public health.

The first step in any enforcement regime is monitoring and investigation to determine the compliance status of the regulated community and to detect violations. Without a well-run investigation program, many violations of environmental and natural resources laws will go undetected and the environment and Marylanders will suffer the very consequences the laws were enacted to prevent.

Creating a unit within the Office of the Attorney General will ensure that environmental and natural resource law compliance receives the attention these vital protections deserve. The unit also would provide Maryland residents and businesses with a clear avenue to report suspected violations of either the environment or natural resources laws.

¹ Earthjustice is a non-profit public interest environmental law organization that represents other non-profits free of charge. Earthjustice uses the power of law and the strength of partnerships to advance clean energy, combat climate change, protect people’s health and preserve magnificent places and wildlife.

Earthjustice strongly urges a favorable report for SB 611.

Thank you in advance for your support. Should you have any questions, please contact me at smiller@earthjustice.org.

Respectfully submitted,



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Earthjustice