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**Testimony encouraging a FAVORABLE report on Senate Bill 281 – Natural Resources –  
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation – Alteration or Removal Requirements**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

January 31, 2024

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB281**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

Submerged aquatic vegetation, or “SAV,” are a critical part of the Chesapeake ecosystem – providing food, habitat and oxygen, while also absorbing nutrients, trapping sediment, and preventing erosion. SAV contributes to better water quality, benefiting the economy, society, and ecology of the Bay. As part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, signed in 2014, Maryland has committed to increasing SAV habitat to 185,000 acres of underwater grasses in the Bay.

Senate Bill 281 will better protect our SAV beds and habitat by adding “trim”, “alter”, and/or “cut” to the approved methods of control of SAV when necessary as opposed to “removal” or “eradication” of SAV. Additionally, this bill will reduce the amount of SAV allowed to be controlled from 60ft to 20ft for navigable access or utility work. Complete removal of SAV roots will result in the decimation of that bed. This bill will better allow for our trimmed grass beds to rebound in future years, supporting our state restoration goals of SAV.

Arundel Rivers Federation applauds the Department for bringing forward this bill and we enthusiastically encourage and support the protection of SAV to improve local water quality, the fisheries economy, and to meet our restoration goals. As such, we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB281**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett  
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper  
Arundel Rivers Federation