

**Testimony in favor of SB653**

**Standing – Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings (Clean Water Justice Act of 2024)**

To: Hon. Brian Feldman, Chair, Hon. Cheryl Kagan, Vice-chair and members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Jerry Kickenson

Date: February 26, 2024

I am writing in **favor of Senate Bill 653**, Standing – Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings (Clean Water Justice Act of 2024).

The Clean Water Justice Act will allow communities harmed by illegal water pollution to enforce state law, the same way that they have been able to under the federal Clean Water Act (CWA).

Unfortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court removed countless streams and wetlands, including in Maryland, from CWA protection, thereby eliminating communities' right to enforce the CWA to protect these waterways. Maryland still protects these waterways, plus groundwater, but the state has no right for communities to enforce state law like under the CWA.

This bill provides a new right for impacted community members to enforce the law in state court the same way they were previously able to do in federal court. Many important water pollution enforcement actions have been brought by community groups. The State often gets involved only after community legal action. This partnership with the state has brought crucial capacity to the state to enforce the law and ensure safe water for all.

I respectfully urge you to reach a **favorable** report for SB653.

Respectfully yours,

Jerry Kickenson

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