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Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1266 Clean Water Commerce Account – Contracts for the Purchase of Environmental Outcomes

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 26, 2024

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB1266**, 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.

House Bill 1266 will provide a much-needed update to the Clean Water Commerce Act of 2021(SB119/HB507), a program designed to meet our Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) through restoration opportunities. Currently, the Department of the Environment requires any approved contract through the program be paid out equally over the useful life of the project, which could be as long as 20 years. Many ground-breaking restoration projects include costly up-front payments, which is at odds with MDE's current payment schedule through the program.

HB1266 will clarify the original objective of the legislation by allowing non-uniform payment schedules. This will allow for more small businesses, nonprofits, farmers, and community organizations to apply for and utilize these funds, making the program more equitable and effective.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports restoring our local waterways and meeting our TMDL goals in an equitable and cost-effective way and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB1266**.

Sincerely,

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

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation