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Senate Bill 653 - Standing - Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings (Clean Water Justice Act of 2024)

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment

MGPA Position: OPPOSE

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. MGPA opposes Senate Bill 653 which substantially increases standing in environmental citizen suit. MGPA is particularly concerned with the definition of injury to include “a negative impact, or the threat of a negative impact, to a person’s health or the use and enjoyment of a natural resource or environment, including a negative impact to aesthetic, recreational, conservational and economic interests that many be shared among community members.”

MGPA views this definition as overly broad and up for interpretation. This bill would allow suit based on the “threat of a negative impact” which is concerning as it could be used as a tactic to delay agricultural construction and/or practices. Additionally, there are many agricultural practices and structures that may be considered non-aesthetic or interpreted to threaten someone’s recreation enjoyment.

MGPA is concerned that this legislation would open farmers and agricultural landowners up to significant citizen suits that even if deemed frivolous; would take considerable time and financial resources which could impact the future of family farms.