



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB653

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

Senate - Education, Energy, and Environment

Jose Coronado-Flores , On Behalf of CASA

February 27th, 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in support of SB653**, because it is important legislation that will address the regressive impact of the recent Sackett Vs. EPA ruling on a community's ability to combat illegal water pollution in local waterways.

In particular, CASA is invested in seeing this bill pass, because our members reside in communities where flooding and inadequate stormwater management put people at risk of dangerous exposure to toxins in the water during severe weather. We cannot risk unrecognized and unaddressed illegal pollution during this era of extreme and sudden flooding. For example, East Riverdale, MD is a community that is not only overburdened and underserved as defined by its EJ score but also is in the Anacostia River's floodplain. Making sure that community members can witness and bring polluters of their local waterways to justice by connecting with water protecting organizations to bring lawsuits is a critical preemptive solution to pollution in vulnerable waterways.

Lastly, our members live in areas that are seen as "paths of least resistance," meaning that polluters feel that they can pollute our waterways with no one to notice, care, or keep them in check. These same sentiments left the Anacostia River and its streams extremely polluted prior to the federal government's Clean Water Act, which acted as a direct vehicle to addressing egregious pollution in the river and working towards restoring its quality. As our membership transitions from being new Americans to generational Americans, they will feel greater connection with the land on which they reside. They will be the new generation of water keepers and protectors.

Wetlands and streams are the lungs and kidneys of our landscape – filtering out pollution, keeping drinking water clean, protecting us from flooding and storm surges, and providing billions of dollars in benefits. Given our urgent climate and biodiversity crises, we should be doing everything we can to protect these waterways. For these reasons, CASA urges a favorable report.

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