



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 22

Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration

Date: February 7, 2024

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: **Favorable**

From: Doug Myers
Maryland Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 22 which requires the State Highway Administration to develop pollinator habitat plans for Rights Of Way, seek federal funding to implement plans, and provide public educational signage about the importance of pollinator habitat.

Pollinators like bees, butterflies, bats, and certain bird species are integral to the biodiversity of the planet and necessary for many food crops such as fruits and vegetables. Development has fragmented or eliminated much pollinator habitat, especially in urban and suburban areas containing high densities of roads. Maryland's I-95 corridor as part of a multi-state megalopolis contributes to that loss, especially for migrating pollinators like monarch butterflies.

Highway rights of way, including cloverleaf highway exchanges, stormwater management ponds and roadside ditches provide significant greenspace upon which the state can re-establish pollinator habitat and control invasive species through the planting of native trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs. As these native habitats develop, maintenance costs will go down, especially for mowing turf, which emits large amounts of greenhouse gases. Adopting HB 22 and taking advantage of federal dollars aimed at restoring native pollinator habitat is a wise step in implementing the state's greenhouse gas reduction pathway that can also improve water quality and the diversity of life sustained within Maryland.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 22.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.