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February 12, 2024

To: Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the Maryland House Committee on Environment and Transportation

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland HB 345 Endangered and Threatened Species, Definitions, Petitions, and Regulations

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of House Bill 345. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. We work with partner organizations, government agencies, and local communities to protect birds and the places they need to survive now, and into the future. HB 345 will codify existing practices to regularly evaluate and update Maryland's threatened and endangered species list for wildlife, including birds and their food sources. This will help Maryland make decisions which continue to provide critical habitat to threatened bird populations across the state.

From our Atlantic shoreline and Chesapeake Bay marshes to our urban parks and western Maryland mountains, birds in Maryland are under threat. Iconic species such as the black skimmer, royal tern, piping plover, and Swainson's warbler and the special Maryland coastal and forested landscapes they depend on will benefit from the measures of HB 345. Evaluating and updating the state's threatened and endangered species list will hold Maryland up as leader in conservation planning.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and climate change. 1/3 of all Maryland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. Through monitoring and regular updating HB 345 will enable Maryland to stay ahead of this trend and bend the bird curve back by being prepared to assess threats and take action to protect Maryland's birds and the places which they and we humans depend on. HB 345 will lay the framework for centering conservation and biodiversity. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in ecosystem preservation and the protection of birds now and in the future.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

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