



Testimony in Support of HB1101
Standing - Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings
(Clean Water Justice Act of 2024)

March 1, 2024

Environment & Transportation Committee

In Support: HB1101

Honorable Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Pesticide Education Network (MPEN), a non-profit organization focused on addressing the impacts of pesticides on the health of all life since 1994, and the Smart on Pesticides Coalition (SOPC), MPEN launched and facilitates since 2012, is comprised of 114 organizations and businesses, both state and national, within representing communities, businesses, health care providers, farmers, environmentalists, Waterkeepers, interfaith congregants as well as environmental justice, public health, and wildlife advocates. MPEN and the Smart on Pesticides Coalition strongly urge a favorable report on HB1101, the Clean Water Justice Act.

This act would enshrine the ability of communities harmed by pollution, including pesticide pollution, to enforce state laws on the books, as they were able to prior to the Supreme Court's recent ruling on the Clean Water Act.

Pesticide spraying on farmland and parks produces runoff into nearby waterways, which is known to cause significant harm to communities downstream. Up until 2023, these communities were able to seek justice in federal court. Now, however, many of these streams and wetlands are left entirely up to the state to manage.

While Maryland does fortunately have laws on the books that supplement the federal Clean Water Act, local communities currently have no way to bring violations forward and join the state in pursuing actions as they were previously able to. HB1101 would rectify this, allowing community organizations to bring violations forward to state courts and work with the state to seek justice.

When the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper, a member of our SOPC, discovered significant levels of bacteria within the Patapsco River, community organizations like Blue Water Baltimore came together and worked alongside the MDE to address several violations of the Clean Water Act. While recent Supreme Court rulings have made further actions like this impossible, the Clean Water Justice Act would ensure community members and organizations would be able to continue to work alongside the state to keep Marylanders safe.

For this reason, we **strongly urge a favorable report** on the Clean Water Justice Act.

Sincerely,

Ruth Berlin, Executive Director
Maryland Pesticide Education Network

Bonnie Raindrop, Coalition Director
Smart on Pesticides Coalition