



Testimony to the Senate Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

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

POSITION: Support

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: February 27, 2024

Since the emergence of the environment movement in the 1970's, the League of Women Voters has advocated for policies that protect our planet and promote public health. The League believes in protecting the Clean Water Act and safeguarding against water pollution.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland **supports SB 653**, which would give communities impacted by water pollution standing to bring suit in state court against illegal polluters. Water quality is essential for public health, and illegal polluters must be held accountable.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently stripped key waterways - mainly streams and wetlands - from protection under the federal Clean Water Act. While Maryland still protects such waterways under state law, citizens and communities do not have the right to enforce these laws by bringing suit against violators.

SB 653 would establish a crucial right for Marylanders to enforce the law against harmful, illegal polluters. Community groups are critical actors in protecting our waterways and holding polluters accountable. The Clean Water Justice Act would protect Maryland's waterways, and protect Maryland's communities. Communities being impacted by illegal water pollution must have a voice, and must have the ability to hold polluters accountable.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland **strongly urges a favorable report on SB 653.**