



*Forming Faithful Stewards,
Caring for Sacred Waters*

PO Box 6791
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 1, 2024

Chairman Marc Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

House Bill 1165 – Whole Watersheds Act

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Korman and Committee Members:

On behalf of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake (IPC), I write to urge your **support of House Bill 1165**, the Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions bill.

Water is life. In all religions, water is central to sacred rituals and symbolic of renewal and interconnectedness. Waters of the Chesapeake, including the rivers and streams in our communities, are sacred, too. They are central to our communities, provide recreation, are relied upon for sustenance by some of our poorest neighbors, and are habitat for countless species and aquatic plants. We have a moral responsibility to care for these waters and ensure future generations can likewise reflect on the beauty and sacredness of these waters.

Maryland has invested billions of dollars over many decades to restore healing to these sacred waters. However, recent studies have concluded that these efforts will still fall short of water quality goals. **We need to work smarter, not harder.** Congregations over the last 10 years have installed hundreds of projects on their properties to help restore the watershed. But these “random acts of restoration” might not be having the impact they could, given grant funding limitations and uncoordinated restoration efforts at the watershed scale.

House Bill 1165 will direct state funding toward geographically-focused coordinated efforts among a wide variety of landowners to accelerate watershed restoration efforts. Imagine a congregation installs a rain garden to reduce stormwater pollution from their property...and, also, the next door school does the same, and the neighborhood abutting the congregation does the same, and the businesses across the street as well. Suddenly, a strategic effort to address pollution at scale yields quicker improvements than that one congregation alone. **House Bill 1165 will also prioritize efforts in environmental justice communities**, which is cornerstone in faith-based environmental advocacy.

IPC urges your FAVORABLE support of House Bill 1165 to create a process and funding for concentrated watershed restoration efforts at the whole-watershed scale. IPC and our partners will continue to do our part to inspire the 5,000 congregations in Maryland to be good stewards of the watershed, and we ask Maryland to support this legislation that will test more strategic ways for accelerating restoration of these sacred waters. Hopefully in our lifetime, it will be **safe** to conduct sacred water rituals in actual rivers. Let’s work smarter together to achieve this dream.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jodi Rose".

Jodi Rose

Executive Director

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake

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