



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: February 14, 2024

Bill: HB 345 – Fish and Wildlife – Endangered and Threatened Species

Position: Support

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 345 - Fish and Wildlife - Endangered and Threatened Species - Definitions, Petitions, and Regulations**. The bill would require regular review and, if warranted, updating of certain regulations listing endangered or threatened species; and provide the ability to petition the state to review listing or unlisting of endangered or threatened species.

Saving wildlife and habitats is one of the National Aquarium's three strategic conservation goals. Our staff and volunteers inspire diverse audiences to learn about ecosystem health and be involved in restoring critical habitat. Even as we work with others towards solutions, we are acutely aware of the global biodiversity crisis and the risks it brings given that we all depend on natural resources and the ecological services they provide.

Across the U.S., 34% of plants and 40% of animals are at risk of extinction.¹ Closer to home, approximately 8% of the 15,000 plant and animal species that live throughout Maryland are considered rare, uncommon, or declining.² Regular review of which species are most at risk is one crucial way to support the many efforts to slow or better yet reverse their decline.

Strengthening how Maryland address species conservation and protection can also contribute to regional collaborations and help prevent a species from reaching the point of being listed under the Endangered Species Act. In this time of significant loss of biodiversity, we need more precautionary approaches to species conservation, and a clearer understanding of which species to focus our attention.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 345.

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¹ NatureServe 2023. Biodiversity in Focus: United States Edition. <https://www.natureserve.org/bif>

² Maryland State Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025.

https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/SWAP_Submission.aspx