



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: March 14, 2024

Bill: HB 993 – Commemorative Weeks – Maryland Climate Education Week

Position: Support

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **House Bill 993 – Commemorative Weeks – Maryland Climate Education Week**, which would establish the first week of April, at the start of Earth Month, as a time to encourage all Marylanders to participate in climate educational activities and take action toward the State's climate commitments.

The National Aquarium connects people with nature to inspire conservation action; combatting climate change is one of our three overarching goals. We take a holistic approach which encompasses climate mitigation, adaptation, education, and communication. We recognize that not everyone is experiencing climate impacts to the same degree, and climate solutions should prioritize equity and environmental justice. The National Aquarium is committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. We work with communities and partners throughout the state to implement nature-based solutions that support climate resilience and have decades of experience in translating ocean and climate science. We advocate for policies, like this one, that empower people to learn about and act on climate.

The National Aquarium welcomes 1.2 million visitors and engages thousands of people throughout the country through our public messaging each year. We aim to educate and empower our audience to take meaningful actions to address climate change. Climate change and climate solutions are not discussed as often and as openly as they should be. Research shows that across the U.S., majorities of Americans understand global warming is happening, is driven by human activities, and is causing harm¹. Most Marylanders support climate policy solutions and think that schools should teach about climate change². However, 65% of Americans report rarely or never discussing climate change in their communities; only 40% of Marylanders say they have at least occasional climate change conversations.

Maryland is a climate leader with a commitment to environmental justice. Our state has enacted some of the most ambitious climate goals in the country, but to achieve these goals we need to talk more about climate change and solutions. We appreciate the work of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change and its efforts to expand climate conversations and applaud Delegate Stein's sponsorship of this bill to ensure that climate education gets the spotlight it deserves for at least one week each year. The time is now: climate impacts will continue to worsen without implementation of existing policies and further action. Broad climate awareness and discussions among Marylanders of all ages and backgrounds will help catalyze community involvement, equitable workforce development, and progress toward a more livable and resilient future. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 993.**

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¹ Leiserowitz, A. et al. 2023. Climate Change in the American Mind: Beliefs & Attitudes, Fall 2023. Available: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-beliefs-attitudes-fall-2023/>

² Yale Climate Opinion Maps 2023. Available: <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us/>