

## **Support for Senate Bill 461**

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Chesapeake Legal Alliance supports Senate Bill 461. This legislation both modernizes infrastructure funding policy in Maryland and corrects a serious problem that has plagued past decisions.

Maryland is woefully behind in making the critical investments needed to adapt to climate change. From devastating floods to debilitating droughts, each year brings a fresh reminder of what the future climate conditions will look like. Yet Maryland's policies have not kept pace with what is necessary to adequately prepare for this future.

A decade ago, Maryland and its counties were making historic and nation-leading investments in stormwater management and flood control infrastructure. Laws like the Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013 and Chapter 151 of 2012 resulted in a trajectory where billions in public funds would be devoted to climate-proofing Maryland. Then, this progress stopped. Current annual spending is a fraction of what it was a decade ago.

Meanwhile, over that same time we experienced some truly baffling decisions that steered many millions in state and federal funds from what would have gone to cash-strapped municipalities to instead flow to for-profit companies. Moreover, later analyses have shown that our neediest local governments, including Baltimore City, were being disproportionately turned away from these water infrastructure dollars.

Senate Bill 461 addresses both of these problems. By expanding the eligibility of the Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund to include uses like floodplain, wetland, and green infrastructure projects, the bill will provide funds for the things that we need most to make Maryland a livable place through the 21st century. And by directing the Department of the Environment to prioritize underserved communities and to make funding available for technical assistance, the bill can help mitigate the past disparities that have deprived some communities from the water infrastructure we desperately need.

For these and many other reasons we support Senate Bill 461.

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