



Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 176 – Agriculture - Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan - Uses of Information

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Hearing
2:30pm – January 28, 2025

1/24/25

To Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** for **SB176** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland’s Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect local waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.

SB176 is a very simple, but beneficial bill that give the affords the Maryland Department of Agriculture more tools to aid in enforcement. Currently, Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) are required to provide the Department of the Environment with copies of Soil and Water Quality Plans. This bill will require conservation districts to also provide them to the Department of Agriculture to help increase enforcement.

Chesapeake watershed states, like Maryland, face challenges with non-point source pollution control, as highlighted by the recent [CESR Report](#), released by the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Science and Technical Advisory Committee. This makes **SB176** a timely effort to improve the department’s ability to address violations that threaten habitat and water quality in the Chesapeake and its tributaries. As the Chester Riverkeeper, through routine monitoring of the tidal and non-tidal waterways I work to protect and restore, I am often on the frontlines to see violations that result in environmental impacts. **When violations occur, it is essential that our state agency’s enforcement actions are as responsive as possible to abate the impacts of pollution and/or loss of habitat, and to enhance a culture of strong enforcement for Maryland’s critical environmental laws.**

We thank the Department of Agriculture for bringing forward this bill, and we look to this committee to give **SB176** a favorable report.

Sincerely,
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper