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**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 898 – Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffer – Vegetative
Buffers and Restrictions on Fertilizer Application**

Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB898** on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for

Arundel Rivers strongly supports SB898, which would prevent nutrient pollution from agricultural fertilizer that would otherwise be applied within 100 feet of tidal water and increase voluntary conservation efforts within agricultural land. As we are currently facing the 2025 targeted deadlines outlined in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and uncertain environmental priorities set by the new administration at the Federal level, we are at a pivotal point in considering the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays. SB898 takes a reasonable, effective, and innovative approach towards bolstering Bay restoration efforts and meeting water quality goals for the farming industry.

The Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) Report suggests that current nonpoint source programs are not generating enough pollutant reductions to meet Bay water quality goals. We need to focus more on addressing one of the largest and most manageable sources of nutrients to the bay – agriculture. This bill is a direct response to this scientific report, which noted that riparian buffer adoption is one of, if not the most, cost efficient practice to maximize pollution reductions. Chesapeake Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) identify Maryland's Critical Area to have an 80% nutrient delivery rate – extending nutrient setbacks to 100 feet removes pollution loads from the most vulnerable areas and reduces the nutrients mass imbalance identified in the CESR report.

This legislation will have a minimal impact on Maryland farmland (less than 2%) yet provide a significant reduction of pollution delivered to the Bay by preventing 83,000lbs/yr of nitrogen, 1,700lbs/year of phosphorus, and 1.3 million lbs/year of sediment entering our waterways according to the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool estimates. Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports reducing fertilizer application to reduce nutrient pollution loading and protecting farmland from accelerated erosion and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB898**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation