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Education, Energy, and
the Environment Committee

Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
SB 946 – Endangered and Threatened Species – Incidental Taking - Bats
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and my fellow members of the distinguished Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 946 – Endangered and Threatened Species – Incidental Taking – Bats and ask for a favorable report as amended.

This is a bat conservation bill. SB 946 would allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a permit process to allow for the incidental takings of the northern long-eared bat, the tri-colored bat, or the Indiana bat, and with the amendment requested by DNR, the Eastern Small-Footed Bat. This process would include the approval of a Habitat Conservation Plan and would ensure a balanced approach to both conservation and forest management that is already practiced at the federal level under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Forests require management and maintenance to remain productive for wildlife, to provide more diverse habitat, and to be less susceptible to disease and insect damage. The ESA allows for Habitat Conservation Plans and Incidental Take Permits both to support healthy forests that are essential for long-term conversation and to protect the economic importance of forests.

For background, Habitat Conservation Plans include an assessment of the likely impacts on the species from the proposed action, the steps that the permit holder will take to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts, and the funding available to carry out the steps. Habitat Conservation Plans benefit not only landowners but also species by securing and managing important habitat and by addressing economic development with a focus on species conservation. An Incidental Take Permit is only needed when the project is reasonably certain to “take” a listed species.

The recent listing of the northern long-eared bat as endangered and the potential for the additional bat species in this bill to receive similar designations is anticipated to affect both rural and urban areas in the State of Maryland. Bats hibernate in attics and under the eaves of older buildings which would impact development and urban revitalization.

Additionally, current federal guidelines would restrict logging from April 1 to September 30 in bat habitats. The forestry sector has a total economic impact of \$3.3 billion and supports 12,890 jobs across the State of Maryland, yet less than 1% of Maryland forests are harvested annually. Maryland grows enough wood to build 50,000 homes per year. Without the legislative changes

provided by SB 946, Maryland's forest industry will face unnecessary restrictions that could negatively impact both conservation efforts and economic stability.

This process is not new to Maryland. Two other animals are allowed incidental takings in our State: the Delmarva Fox Squirrel and the Puritan Tiger Beetle. These conservation efforts have resulted in the Delmarva Fox Squirrel being removed from the endangered species list in December 2015.

This bat conservation legislation, Senate Bill 946, is a measured and fair approach, promoting long-term conservation of these endangered bat species while ensuring necessary land management activities of Maryland forests.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 946.