

Written testimony in favor of HB0878 Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2025

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Vernal Pools are important for many reasons stated here today.

As a water quality person, I can tell you that vernal pools provide important ecosystem services like slowing down and holding storm water. This is important because we already have lots of impervious surfaces (like roads) that shuttle water quickly to our rivers which can increase the intensity of flooding. Vernal pools help balance that out. Vernal pools also hold the water and filter it, which helps decrease sediment pollution and also helps to replenish groundwater.

As an environmental educator, I can tell you that Vernal Pools are essential for some species to exist. Some rare and some common species require this type of habitat to thrive and reproduce. Some use it because it's there but others actually require this type of environment to survive and reproduce.

As a biologist, I can tell you that these wetlands are temporary which is a distinguishing important factor (because fish can't live there), but also a challenge for protection. I can also tell you that the area around the VP is as important as the actual VP because that is the buffer for the pool and also is where the mole salamanders live most of the year, underground. They burrow through underground tunnels in the adjacent areas and use the pools for reproduction.

In addition to all the previously mentioned reasons, Vernal Pools are an important natural resource to humans and are available to all communities to observe regardless of native language, income, or education level.

Spending time outside/in nature is one proven way to combat feelings of anxiety and depression (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8125471/>). Observing the organisms that exist in the natural ecosystems around us is meditative and awe inspiring

As someone whose job is to help interpret the natural environment, I can tell you that few things affect people as much as showing them what animals coexist nearby. Once people are made aware of underwater organisms that live in streams and natural pools, that is when people change their habits and behaviors.

Vernal pools are an opportunity to use our backyards and parks to connect with nature. They are an opportunity to see and protect an ecosystem that doesn't get much attention, but is accessible to all. They are an opportunity for kids from communities all over Maryland to experience the joy of connection to their outdoor world. I encourage you to protect them by voting in favor of the Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act.