

## **Testimony in Support of HB0731 – The Maryland Connectivity and Crossings Act Environment and Transportation Committee 2/19/2025**

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of 30 organizations in strong support of HB0731, the Maryland Connectivity and Crossings Act. This legislation represents a critical step forward in addressing the mounting challenges of wildlife-vehicle collisions, habitat fragmentation, and transportation safety.

### **Enhancing Public Safety and Reducing Costs**

Each year, Maryland experiences nearly [33,000 reported deer-vehicle collisions](#), resulting in substantial economic and human costs. Between 2012 and 2021, [14 Marylanders lost their lives](#) due to wildlife-related crashes, and the financial burden of these incidents exceeds [\\$100 million annually](#). Insurance companies have incurred more than [\\$500 million in losses](#) since 2021 from such collisions, and a [recently released study](#) on the effects of wild animal collisions on premium increases for insurance, shows the ways in which those losses can be passed on to Maryland drivers. Proactively investing in wildlife crossings will reduce accidents, protect motorists, and ease the financial burden on taxpayers and insurers.

### **Demonstrated Success of Wildlife Crossings**

The effectiveness of wildlife crossings is well-documented. In Virginia, the installation of fencing and culverts resulted in a [92% reduction in deer-vehicle collisions](#) at select sites, generating [\\$2.3 million in savings per site](#) within just two years. Similar success stories across the country underscore the cost-effectiveness of these measures. By integrating performance metrics and measurable outcomes into HB0731, Maryland can ensure that wildlife crossings are implemented in a way that delivers proven results.

### **Laying the Groundwork for Future Investment**

The passage of this bill is critical to ensuring Maryland is prepared to address wildlife-vehicle collisions and habitat connectivity in a strategic, coordinated way. By establishing the Wildlife Connectivity Fund, HB0731 creates a dedicated mechanism for supporting wildlife-friendly infrastructure, allowing the state to proactively invest in solutions rather than reacting to costly collisions and habitat fragmentation. This fund provides flexibility—whether through state investment, partnerships, or future funding opportunities—to advance priority projects as resources become available.

Additionally, this bill formalizes collaboration between state agencies, local governments, and conservation experts, ensuring that Maryland has a clear roadmap for identifying and implementing effective wildlife crossings. With growing development pressures and increasing

road expansion, HB0731 lays the foundation for long-term, cost-effective infrastructure solutions that enhance both public safety and ecological connectivity.

## **Advancing Ecological Connectivity and Sustainable Development**

Wildlife habitat fragmentation is a growing concern as Maryland's population expands and pressures from land development increase. Studies have shown that species such as the wood turtle—a Species of Greatest Conservation Need—are facing [severe declines due to road mortality](#). This bill will help counteract these threats by requiring counties and municipalities to incorporate wildlife movement and connectivity considerations into their comprehensive land use planning efforts. Providing local governments with up-to-date data and best practices will lead to smarter, more sustainable development decisions that balance growth with conservation.

The Maryland Connectivity and Crossings Act is a practical, science-backed solution to a pressing public safety and conservation issue. By passing this legislation, Maryland will protect motorists, reduce economic losses, conserve imperiled wildlife, and secure federal funding that will yield long-term benefits for our communities and natural heritage. I urge you to support HB0731 and ensure that Maryland remains a leader in innovative and effective transportation infrastructure solutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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Organizations signed on in support of the Maryland Connectivity and Crossings Act

American Rivers  
Association of Forest Industries, Inc.  
Audubon Mid-Atlantic  
Audubon Society of Central Maryland  
Baltimore Green Space  
Calico Fields Environmental Education  
Catoctin Land Trust  
Center for Large Landscape Conservation  
Climate Change Working Group of  
Frederick County  
Climate Communications Coalition  
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Forever Maryland  
Harford Land Trust  
Hunters of Maryland, LLC

Indivisible HoCoMD  
Maryland Ornithological Society  
Maryland State Grange  
Maryland Votes for Animals  
National Aquarium  
National Parks Conservation Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Potomac Conservancy  
Queen Anne's Conservation Association  
Scenic Rivers Land Trust  
Sierra Club  
Susquehannock Wildlife Society  
Vernal Pool Partners  
Wild Potomac  
Wildlands Network