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Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee

In Support of

House Bill 1135

Environment – Maryland Clean Water Fund – Authorized Uses

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

Environmental injustice plagues our State as well as the rest of the planet. As the industrial toll on the environment worsens, urban residents continue to disproportionately face the impacts of environmental harm. While we have made some strides to revitalize the environment and mitigate harm caused to our constituents, we must do more to protect our urban communities from receiving the brunt of our shortcomings in environmental preservation.

The Maryland Clean Water Fund (MCWF) has been essential year after year as we manage the human toll on our State’s ample waterways. As recently as this month, the Attorney General prosecuted two individuals for illegally dumping harmful waste into a local waterway, and the revenue from these fines were directed to the MCWF. House Bill 1135 recognizes the need for our waterway protection to consider urban forest management when awarding funds from the MCWF.

In the City of Baltimore, our residents continue to experience the lasting effects of a long history of environmental injustice. Two decades ago, Baltimore signed a consent decree reinforcing the standards of the Clean Water Act. The most recent water quality report conducted by nonprofit Blue Water Baltimore in 2023, however, continued to illustrate our inability to adequately take care of our City and State’s waterways. The report gave an ‘F’ grade for the health of the Jones Falls, the Gwynn Falls, the Patapsco River, and the Baltimore Harbor.

In a landmark settlement protecting Maryland's waterways, Fleischmann’s Vinegar Company agreed to pay \$1.1 million for unauthorized pollution discharges from its Baltimore

facility. This marks a significant step toward environmental accountability and ecosystem restoration.

HB 1135 would enable those settlement dollars to be used in the adjacent forest to the benefit of the Coldspring community and the Cylburn Arboretum.

While our City, particularly the Harbor, has experienced some health improvements thanks to projects such as Mr. Trash Wheel and the rest of the Trash Wheel family, our State must do more for our urban residents. The MCWF is a crucial resource that can help us inch closer to a future where our waterways are an attraction more than a deterrent, and I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1135 to make that future a reality.

February 26, 2025