

Testimony in Support of HB1175
Nearshore Farming and Finance Act
House Environment and Transportation Committee February 28, 2025
Submitted on February 26, 2025 by 6:00pm

To Chair Korman and Committee Members,

My name is Erin Kusmider. I live in Chestertown adjacent to a tidal marsh near the Chester River, and I urge a **favorable** report on HB1175.

The Nearshore Farming and Finance Act targets conservation practices and support to farmers in our most ecologically sensitive areas of the Chesapeake. This bill is mutually beneficial to farmers and the ecology of the Chesapeake Bay.

This Bill will:

- Increase the size of riparian buffers to 100 feet simultaneously reducing pollution from farms and surrounding lands entering the Bay and increasing the security of “nearshore” land by minimizing the loss of crop land due to erosion.
- Improve on existing incentive programs to benefit the farmers who lease land as well as those who own land in critical areas.
- Support the Tree Solutions Now Act from 2021 more easily due to the increase in size of the riparian buffer to 100 feet from 35 feet totaling 2,665 acres. This is almost 6 times the size needed in upland areas (more than 100 feet away from the shoreline) and will cost less to plant with trees.

I **support** this bill because I have witnessed the change in shoreline along the river over the past 25 years that I have been privileged enough to spend time on: boating, crabbing, swimming, and hiking. Shorelines lacking in buffers, especially those made up of farmland are much more likely to disappear and at a faster rate. This impacts water quality and clarity which directly impact my family’s and friends’ ability to enjoy all the river has to offer. As a parent, I worry about the quality of the water and check the bacteria levels before taking my family out on the water in the summer, especially after a heavy rain. When I can see farmland come almost right down to the river, that is alarming as I know sediment, fertilizers, and runoff are washing directly into the water. What may have started as a 35 foot buffer is rapidly whittled away, especially if the riparian buffer is not robust enough. This bill will increase that buffer, better secure the shoreline and ensure less of what we want in the water gets there. Farmland is preserved, residents can enjoy the river more easily, and the health of the bay improves. This is a win-win-win.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee to give HB1175 a **favorable** report.

Sincerely,

Erin Kusmider

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