



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 687 – Environment - Flood Risk Review Process - Establishment

2/27/2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in SUPPORT of SB687 on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a Riverkeeper organization focused on protecting water quality on Maryland's Eastern Shore, with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement. Our organization grounds its positions in measurable data, long-term monitoring, and adaptive management.

SB687 would require the Maryland Department of the Environment to incorporate updated flood risk science, cumulative downstream impacts, and climate-adjusted precipitation data into its permit and plan review process. This is a commonsense, science-based step that aligns directly with the realities facing our rivers today.

On Maryland's Eastern Shore, flooding is no longer a theoretical concern. Sea level rise, increasingly intense precipitation events, and expanding impervious surface coverage are reshaping how water moves across the landscape. When development proceeds without fully accounting for cumulative flood and stormwater impacts, the result is predictable: increased erosion, nutrient and sediment loading, degraded submerged aquatic vegetation, and stressed oyster habitat. ShoreRivers and our partners then must invest significant public and private dollars to repair damage that could have been prevented through better planning.

SB687 strengthens upstream decision-making so that downstream communities and ecosystems are not left to absorb avoidable harm. By requiring MDE to evaluate how proposed projects affect stormwater conveyance, storage, and infiltration at a watershed scale, the bill advances the same systems-based approach that underpins successful restoration efforts across the Chesapeake Bay.

Importantly, the bill directs the use of updated climate-adjusted precipitation projections. Restoration practitioners design living shorelines, stream restorations, and stormwater retrofits using forward-looking rainfall data. State permitting should be held to the same standard. Approving infrastructure based on outdated assumptions undermines both public safety and long-term water quality goals.

ShoreRivers

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The requirement for consultation with local jurisdictions and planning entities also supports transparency and coordinated watershed management. Flooding, like pollution, does not respect jurisdictional boundaries. Ensuring that state determinations are informed by comprehensive data and are binding in local stormwater decisions will help prevent fragmented outcomes that shift risk from one community to another.

SB687 does not halt development. Rather, it ensures that development proceeds responsibly, informed by the best available science and with full consideration of cumulative impacts. That approach protects taxpayers from future infrastructure failures, reduces long-term restoration costs, and safeguards the ecological integrity of Maryland's rivers.

For these reasons, ShoreRivers respectfully urges a favorable report on SB687. Strengthening flood risk review today will reduce water quality degradation tomorrow and support the long-term resilience of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BF', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Benjamin Ford, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper, on behalf of ShoreRivers