

## Senate Bill 688, Stream and Floodplain Restoration Projects - Requirements and Limitations

Position: Support

February 27, 2026

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Hiba Hakkim, and as a representative from the Stream Team at Burleigh Manor Middle School, I am writing to express my support for the Senate Bill 688. I first discovered the awful damage to waterways in Howard County during my Environmental Science seminar. I apprehend that these projects themselves are credited far too well and cause irreversible damage to our stream beds.

From research, I have learned that stream stabilization projects are performed for MS4 and mitigation credits to offset harm caused by developing wetlands and sensitive habitats. The projects are often directed to prevent erosion in stream beds, yet in order to conduct these projects heavy machinery is brought onto the site, compacting the soil. This compaction causes the soil to be less absorbent, hence the increase in sediment runoff. The increase in runoff intoxicates the stream's water quality through rising temperatures and blocked infrastructure: thereby damaging habitats. This machinery also runs over tree roots, causing growing trees to cease. Similarly, the initial step in these stream stabilization projects is to uproot trees larger or eight inches in diameter, those exact trees whose roots hold up the banks. Hundreds of trees are left, classified as too small to be considered a tree, posing it as though they are only removing a few trees. However, without the trees: the banks collapse, posing issues upon issues. Moreover, contractors end up planting generic undeveloped trees, lacking the necessary biodiversity in an abundant environment. Many of these replanted trees are only about a year old, with only a handful of different species. Unsurprisingly, to contradict themselves, when contractors go back in to replace uprooted trees, the trees are usually around a centimeter in diameter. With the newly planted trees, which takes years to develop and upholster the banks once more, erosion is much more present. Instead of fixing the problem, they make it worse by causing irreparable damage for ages. This puts the entire ecosystem in a state of imbalance at which it'll remain until the environment can once again reach equilibrium.

Accordingly, I am pleased that Senate Bill 688 calls for the management of runoff, the integrity of stream channels, and the minimization of pollutants in stormwater. This calls for restoring, enhancing, and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of state waters. With this bill in place, many prior responsibilities to the development of a stream stabilization are considered; and assessments are conducted to establish the requirements of stormwater management plans. This bill further ensures that the required budget is met, quality is kept, and our healthy environment is left.

On behalf of the children of Maryland, who will inherit the environment you leave for us, I support Senate Bill 688.

Signed,

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