

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 Julianna Siegel, and as a very young, and extremely concerned citizen of Maryland, I am writing to express my support for the Senate Bill 688. I initially learned about the terrible damage to the Howard County waterways during my Environmental Science Seminar at Burleigh Manor Middle School. I strongly feel that these stream stabilization projects are extremely unnecessary, and do irreversible damage to our environment.

From research, I have discovered that during a stream stabilization heavy machinery is brought out to the site, which crushes animals living underground. Since, the heavy machinery is constantly running over the ground, this compacts the soil, making it less absorbent, hence increasing runoff and sediment. An increase in sediment can lower the water quality of a stream, destroy aquatic habitats, raise water temperature, and clog infrastructure, as well as increase erosion. Most stream stabilization projects are designed to help stop erosion in the stream bed, however stream stabilization projects end up causing more erosion. Many trees are removed, and these tree roots are what is helping hold together the banks of the stream. When these trees are removed, there are no longer roots there to hold up the banks, so in turn the banks end up collapsing. This would not be an issue if stream stabilization projects were not favored and used entirely at all. Additionally, the heavy machinery runs over tree roots, which causes the trees to die. So in addition to all the trees removed, there are also many trees that die unintentionally in the process. Contractors end up planting generic baby trees, which lack biodiversity. Many of these trees are only one year old, and contractors typically only plant a handful of different species. This causes a lack of the preexisting biodiversity. Plus, when counting the trees they plan to remove in a stream stabilization project, contractors decide on what diameter size of a tree is acceptable to call it a tree. This size is typically eight inches in diameter or more. Due to this, they leave out hundreds of trees that are "too small" to be classified as a tree. They make it seem like they are only removing a few trees, when in reality they are removing hundreds of trees. However, when planting trees to replace the uprooted trees, the trees they plant are usually around a centimeter in diameter, which the contractors classify as a tree when planting.

Therefore, I am pleased that Senate Bill 688 calls for the treatment of stormwater runoff to remove pollutants and enhance water quality. This will help keep our waterways clean and functional. Additionally, the bill mentioned minimizing disturbance to existing streams, floodplains, and riparian upland forests. This will help prevent unnecessary projects from happening to our environment, as well as keeping these critical habitats natural. Further more,

Senate Bill 688 expresses minimizing impacts to wildlife habitats, tree loss and removal, earth disturbance, and disturbance to native vegetation. This is a very important part of this bill since it allows very little disturbance of wildlife habitats. Plus, minimizing tree removal will help keep our forests lush and healthy. Similarly, reducing erosion caused by tree removal. Minimizing earth disturbance will help address the problem of heavy machinery killing tree roots, because of the constant action of running them over. Limiting the disturbance of native vegetation will help protect animal habitats for birds, mice, deer, and more. The bill also was written to avoid impacts to noninvasive plant communities and specimen trees. Noninvasive plant communities are a key part in keeping our forests healthy, and providing animals with habitats. Specimen trees play a huge part in providing key nesting for birds, as well as food for woodpeckers. This part of the bill is one of the most important parts, as it protects these critical trees. Also, Senate Bill 688 calls for when appropriate, prioritizing the removal of nonnative and invasive trees, as well as vegetation. This key factor will help control invasive plant species. In addition, this can be used as an alternative to removing native plants.

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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