



The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain

House Bill 254

Maryland Department of Natural Resources - Supporting Inclusive Community Adaptation Act

Position: Support
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Date: March 31, 2026
From: Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 254.

Bill Summary

House Bill 254 would remove the sunset associated with the Resilience Through Restoration Capital Grant Fund within the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The fund would provide funding to state agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations for the planning, design, construction, and adaptive management of nature-based restoration projects that would reduce the State's climate change vulnerabilities and enhance resilience in our communities and public lands. The bill would also require community engagement in project planning and development, along with specialized training provided to local governments. Finally, DNR would be required to complete a climate vulnerability assessment on all Department lands, coupled with an analysis of eligible lands for climate mitigation, adaptation, or resilience projects.

Position Rationale

House Bill 254 would reinforce the recently approved Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement (Agreement), presided over by Governor Wes Moore, in his capacity as Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Executive Council. The Agreement establishes new objectives for improving the Bay's ecological health, expanding public access to natural areas, and strengthening the regional economy, which includes Maryland's \$3.2 billion tourism and \$600 million seafood sectors. The revised Agreement mandates that signatory states reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution by 2040, in addition to pursuing goals related to habitat, fisheries, sustainable landscapes, and community engagement. Concurrently, the Adaptation and Resiliency Working Group of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC) has engaged in substantive public outreach over several years to advance climate change adaptation and resilience strategies and safeguard Maryland's communities. Consequently, this bill would directly support MDE's efforts to attain the goals of the Agreement and to implement recommendations developed by the climate experts of the Commission.

Accordingly, MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 254.

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