

February 23, 2026

TO: Members of the Maryland House and Senate Committees

FROM: Charles Hegberg, Environmental & Restoration Consultant, Maryland and Mid-Atlantic Region

RE: SUPPORT for HB0871 – Carbon Removal and Biomass Storage Framework

Dear Members of the Committee,

As an environmental and restoration consultant with extensive experience across Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic region, I write in strong support of HB0871, the Carbon Removal and Biomass Storage Framework. I respectfully urge a favorable report on this legislation, which is essential to ensuring Maryland remains a global leader in climate innovation while simultaneously revitalizing our rural economies and forestry sectors.

I. Maryland Innovation and National Leadership

The technology underlying Wood Vaulting was invented and developed at the University of Maryland. With support from the Maryland Energy Innovation Accelerator (MEIA), we have already witnessed the successful construction of the world's first commercial-scale Wood Vault right here in Northern Maryland—the Potomac Project. This achievement is a testament to Maryland's scientific ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit.

Despite this remarkable milestone, our local startups currently find themselves trapped in a “regulatory gray zone,” forced to navigate rules designed for waste disposal rather than carbon sequestration. HB0871 directly addresses this critical gap by:

- **Differentiating residuals from waste**, providing the clear legal distinction required for permanent carbon storage operations;
- **Adopting high-integrity verification standards**, such as the Isometric or Puro methodologies, ensuring every ton of sequestered carbon is independently verified and credible.

Other states—most notably California—have already enacted binding legislation such as the Climate Crisis Act to reach net-zero, and are actively debating multi-million dollar carbon dioxide removal (CDR) purchase programs. Maryland should not stand on the sidelines. We possess the home-grown science and the startups ready to scale. We simply need the “rules of the road” that HB0871 provides to unlock their potential.

I also wish to note that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has discussed developing a “For Benefit” permit process to help environmentally beneficial projects navigate Maryland's complex permitting framework. HB0871 would work synergistically with such an initiative, providing both the statutory foundation and the regulatory clarity needed to expedite approval of carbon storage projects.

II. Economic Renewal and Rural Development

The economic case for HB0871 is equally compelling. Maryland's highly valuable “wood baskets”—including the lower Eastern Shore and Western Maryland—have suffered significant economic

decline following the closure of regional sawmill facilities, pellet operations, and papermills. These closures have not only hurt local communities but have also contributed to deteriorating forest health and increased pests and wildfire risk.

HB0871 offers a genuine lifeline for these communities by establishing a new industry centered on Improved Forest Management (IFM), another verifiable carbon methodology; and sustainable wood harvesting, and carbon storage. This framework will catalyze the creation of specialized, high-paying technical jobs in our rural agricultural and forestry sectors—exactly where investment is most needed.

Critically, this bill does not just help the climate in the abstract—it supports sustainable forest management by utilizing only “un-merchantable biomass” and forestry residuals, transforming underutilized debris into high-value carbon assets. While states like California are already investing tens of millions of dollars in CDR purchase programs, Maryland has the unique opportunity to leverage our own local innovation to grow our economy from within, rather than ceding this emerging market to other states.

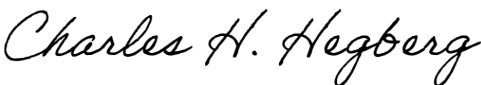
Furthermore, Maryland has thousands of sand and gravel pits and end-of-life mine sites that are in need of remediation. This opportunity, developed by myself and receiving strong support by both the Maryland Department of Environment and Department of Natural Resources offers significant opportunity to see degraded landscapes restored for the benefit of the Chesapeake Bay. This legislation would enable these properties to serve as sites for “shallow geologic storage” of carbon—solving two problems simultaneously: accelerating land restoration and advancing our climate goals.

Conclusion

HB0871 represents a rare convergence of environmental leadership, economic opportunity, and Maryland ingenuity. It builds on world-class university research already conducted in our own state, creates a durable regulatory framework for an emerging industry, supports rural workforce revitalization, and positions Maryland to lead—not follow—on one of the defining challenges of our time.

I strongly urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB0871. Maryland has earned the right to lead on climate and carbon innovation. This bill ensures we do.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles Hegberg
Environmental & Restoration Consultant
Maryland and Mid-Atlantic Region