



Promoting native landscapes through education,
advocacy and collaborative action.
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**Testimony: SB 523, Department of the Environment – Water Resources -
Protection of Vernal Pools (Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2026)**
Committee: Energy, Education, and Environment
Hearing Date: February 24, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Brian Feldman; Vice Chair, Cheryl Kagan; and Honorable Members of the Committee:

Wild Ones Nation’s Capital Region, a 250-member chapter of the national organization,
requests your support for this bill.

A 2023 Supreme Court decision eliminated protection of vernal pools by weakening the Clean Water Act.¹ These already threatened and fragile ecosystems now urgently rely on states to enact protections, such as this bill does. Vernal pools are important to both healthy water processes and healthy ecosystems. Regarding water processes, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, when writing about vernal pools, noted that “In addition to their vital functions of flood control and water filtration, they are also home to many endangered species.”²

It is well documented that vernal pools play a massively outsized role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. This is largely because they dry out regularly, and thus predatory fish can’t survive in vernal pools. This makes vernal pools a safe haven for native salamanders and frogs to reproduce, many of which are endangered. The pools also impact the broader ecosystems as animals rely on the amphibians for food sources, and countless forest creatures visit the pools for water.³

Taking action to protect the remaining vernal pools is critical for their and broader ecosystems survival. Many states have taken steps to protect vernal pools following the weakening of the Clean Water Act, in particular, Maine recently passed legislation to protect vernal pools⁴. We urge Maryland to be a leader in vernal pool conservation and pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Pru Foster
President

Dorothy Broadman
Director, Legislative Advocacy

¹ www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/22pdf/21-454_4g15.pdf

² dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/rte/rteplantfacts.aspx?PID=Yellow+Water-crowfoot

³ nationalzoo.si.edu/conservation/news/hidden-life-vernal-pools

⁴ legiscan.com/ME/text/LD497/id/3257115