



Maryland Office
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Baltimore, MD 21224

March 27, 2026

To: Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland HB 254 Supporting Inclusive Community Adaptation Act

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of House Bill 254. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Along with the undersigned, independent Audubon Chapters across Maryland, we enthusiastically support HB 254

Science tells us birds are in decline due to pollution and habitat loss. 1/3 of all Maryland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. HB 254 will position Maryland to slow this habitat loss while investing in natural systems to protect habitat, improve water quality and increase resiliency protections that the Chesapeake Bay, our tidal coastlines, forests and parks provide for the region's birds and people. HB 254 will give the Department of Natural Resources the capability to increase community engagement efforts supporting habitat restoration and conservation efforts throughout Maryland. This will ensure that the incredible work of MD DNR and partners such as Audubon includes meaningful, robust public engagement so that the important conservation and restoration work happening in Maryland incorporates voices of those who live and work in the very landscapes where these projects are taking place.

One such collaboration with MD DNR is Audubon's *Marshes for Tomorrow* initiative working with state and federal government, local communities and non-government partners to maintain the best 30,000 acres of tidal salt marsh in Maryland, an ecosystem that is seriously at risk of erosion due to increased coastal flooding and sea level rise. As our [Marshes for Tomorrow](#) plan outlines, this strong collaboration is an investment to support Maryland's economy, provide a protective buffer for coastal communities, strengthen our environment and save threatened species.

HB 254 will make this work stronger, more inclusive, and more reflective of the communities where this work is taking place through tangible actions such as providing childcare during public engagement meetings, provide more opportunities for public engagement with more in-person, and digital community outreach tools about resiliency in Maryland, and the development of more accessible educational materials about conservation and resiliency programs in Maryland.

House Bill 254 will hold Maryland up as a national leader in habitat protection and conservation planning, while strengthening our collective ability to empower communities to participate in meaningful public discourse about improvements to their natural resources and to the places that are important to them.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of House Bill 254.

Thank You,

Jim Brown, Policy Director
Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Lisa Garrett, President
Prince George's Audubon Society

Julie Dunlap, Advocacy Chair
Audubon Society of Central Maryland

Ben Springer, Advocacy Chair
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