

Marlene Durholz
Hanover, MD 21076
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RE: Favorable position on SB0523 Water Resources - Protection of Vernal Pools (Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2026)

Dear Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Members:

I am writing to ask that the committee provide a favorable report on SB0523, Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2026.

Many vernal pools do not meet the current MDE wetland or federal Clean Water Act protection criteria although several Mid Atlantic and New England states have implemented legal protections or certification programs to preserve them. SB0523 will designate vernal pools as named wetlands in MDE regulations, and along with a 100 foot buffer zone, protect amphibian habitat. SB0523 also requires MDE to prepare a plan for notifying the public of the location of vernal pools and other wetlands.

I believe notifying the public of the location of vernal pools and other wetlands will bring the needed attention to this essential, unique, seasonally transient wetland ecosystem. Until volunteering at the Patapsco Heritage Greenway, I did not understand the importance of vernal pools.

I urge a Favorable SB0523 committee report and floor vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

Marlene Durholz
Hanover, MD