



Testimony in OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 688 – Environment – Stream and Floodplain Restoration Projects – Requirements and Limitations

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 3, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **OPPOSITION OF SB688**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs.

Today's streams are not what they once used to be. Developmental pressures have increased runoff so many of our streams have become incised, degraded, and have significantly reduced habitat value. What were once meandering streams or wetland complexes, are now eroding gullies with exposed, steep banks. Every time we have a large rain event, large amounts of stormwater runoff will rush down these pathways, carrying nutrient and sediment pollution to our waterways and further eroding the already degraded stream, draining wetland habitat, and even putting infrastructure at risk.

Stream restoration is a tool that repairs stream habitat, enhances public spaces, all while also benefiting downstream water quality. According to the Department of the Environment, the goals and objects for any stream restoration project include improving stream habitat, preventing erosion, restoring hydrology, reconnecting floodplains, reducing sediment and nutrient delivery downstream, improving water quality, removing invasives and replacing with riparian vegetation with natives, and re-establishing continuous stream channels. With the increasing threats from climate change and increasingly intense storms, stream restoration also works to protect public infrastructure, address flooding issues, and increase the overall resiliency of our communities. Additionally, this catalyst for environmental restoration is also a driver of local economies across our state. Setbacks to stream restoration would have direct economic impact on the engineers, construction workers, truck drivers, landscape professionals, quarry workers, and so many other local laborers that work on these projects every that in effort to reduce local pollution and create more resilient communities.

We have seen instances of large-scale stream restoration, often associated with mitigation work, resulting in excessive tree clearing. However, we have also seen many incredibly successful stream restoration practices that have resulted in minimal tree loss, biological uplift, increased community resilience, and reduced sediment loading downstream. **While SB688 has good intentions, it invertedly will make all stream restoration projects difficult to implement, halting voluntary projects that seek to provide improved habitat, public resources, resiliency, and downstream water quality implemented by non-profit partners.**

Arundel Rivers supported the Whole Watershed Act, passed by this Committee in 2024, which outlined new, rigorous standards for stream and floodplain restoration, which only recently took effect this past July. Arundel Rivers is eager to be a part of the discussion in evaluating these new standards and discussing if there is room for improvement after they have had time to be properly assessed.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports the implementation of stream restoration practices that result in improved stream habitat and improved downstream water quality. **We have implemented numerous stream restoration projects on private and public lands – in community neighborhoods and public parks – within 15-minute driving distance from the Senate and we enthusiastically invite all members of this Committee to join us for a tour of any of them.** Arundel Rivers respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE REPORT on SB688.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Elle Bassett in black ink.

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Carr in blue ink.

Jennifer Carr
Director of Restoration

