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Testimony in SUPPORT of HB578 – Fish and Wildlife – Endangered and Threatened Species and Migratory Birds – Regulation, Lists, Petitions, Essential Habitats, and Takings

Environment and Transportation Committee
February 18, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB578**, 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.

House Bill 578 is focused on stronger protections for our endangered and threatened species and migratory birds. This bill updates and strengthens regulator review procedures by requiring the Secretary of Natural Resources to periodically review and if necessary, update regulations relating to endangered and threatened species on a regular schedule. The bill would refine how decisions are made about which species are listed as endangered or threatened. The bill also provides options and criteria for delisting species.

Most critically, the bill would allow the Secretary to formally designate certain areas as essential habitat for species that need them. As we continue to tackle the affordable housing crisis in Maryland and promote new and affordable development, it is essential that our Department of Natural Resources also has the ability to protect and preserve essential habitats for our most sensitive species.

Arundel Rivers supports the efforts to modernize how the state protects and manages wildlife and endangered species, strengthen the species recovery processes, and ensure that science drives the state's conservation decisions. We respectfully request a FAVORABLE REPORT on HB578.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation