

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

TO: Delegate Marc Korman, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

FROM: Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Manager, The Nature Conservancy; Cait Kerr, State Policy Manager, The Nature Conservancy,

POSITION: Support HB 254 Supporting Inclusive Community Adaptation Act

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB 254 offered by the Department of Natural Resources and sponsored by Chair Korman. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering data-driven, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water, air, and healthy, secure living environments for our human and natural communities today and in the generations to come.

Climate change poses an existential threat to the natural resources, economy and Maryland's vibrant economies that depend on a healthy living environment. Maryland is already facing extreme climate change impacts in the form of rising sea levels, extreme precipitation, and more frequent heat waves. In 2022, the Climate Solutions Now Act (CSNA) established the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals in the country – to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 60% by 2031 and obtain net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.¹ Since the passage of this landmark legislation, Maryland has passed a suite of climate bills and nature positive legislation to support the implementation of CSNA. The legislature's work has been supplemented by Governor Moore's office and several executive orders, including EO 01.01.2024.19 - Leadership by State Government: Implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan.²

While we must urgently reduce greenhouse gas emissions now to prevent further catastrophic effects of climate change, certain impacts are already locked in and likely to continue adversely impacting the state's natural environment and communities in the years to come. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources' HB 254 is a forward-looking bill that tackles current and future climate impacts by investing resources and capacity in the following ways:

¹ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Legislation/Details/sb0528?ys=2022RS>

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https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/52/EO%2001.01.2024.19%20Leadership%20by%20State%20Government-%20Implementing%20Maryland%27s%20Climate%20Pollution%20Reduction%20Plan_Accessible.pdf

- 1) Increasing Climate Change Resilience of Local Jurisdictions – HB 254 will Create resources, tools, trainings, and streamlined guidance for local governments and communities to undertake climate resilience planning. DNR already maintains several planning tools for use by local planners. HB 254 will create an adaptation and resilience clearinghouse and make these tools more easily accessible, as well as provide user-friendly guidance. This bill is in line with guidance from the Maryland Commission on Climate Change’s 2025 Annual Report, which has three key recommendations for promoting adaptation and resiliency in the state.³ Among them is the recommendation for DNR to develop a public-facing tracker released in 2026 that promotes Maryland’s progress on the climate adaptive actions listed in the Next Generation Adaptation plan.⁴
- 2) Increasing Climate Change Resilience on Department Lands – A key component of HB 254 is to identify climate vulnerabilities and risks on state parks, wildlife management areas, natural resource management areas, and state forests. This information will help DNR in evaluating opportunities to implement climate change mitigation, adaptation, and/or resilience projects, including nature-based solutions on state lands. By 2035, DNR will model restoration and adaptation practices for two coastal and two inland state properties.
- 3) HB 254 also allows DNR the discretion to partially forgive loans under the Shore Erosion Control Construction Loan Fund, based on ecological restoration and adaptation-based performance indicators. Interest earned through the program will directly flow into DNR funds. This measure is important for DNR programs’ continued functioning.

TNC commends DNR for developing and Chair Korman on introducing this bill. Maryland has a responsibility to invest in climate adaptation and resilience measures to protect both people and environment. HB 254 advances this responsibility with a vision of a healthy and resilient Maryland. **Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 254.**

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https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Documents/MCCC%20Annual%20Report/2025%20MCCC%20Annual%20Report/MCCC_Annual_Report_2025.pdf

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<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Documents/Next%20Generation%20Adaptation%20Plan.pdf>