



TESTIMONY FOR SB0523

Department of the Environment - Water Resources - Protection of Vernal Pools (Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2026)

Bill Sponsor: Senator Washington

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0523 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Vernal pools are unique, small ecosystems that help replenish groundwater and filter stormwater. They are a small, and often seasonal, piece of our environment that plays a very important role. Vernal pools are vanishing because they do not have hydric soils or wetlands vegetation required by current MDE wetlands regulations. Adding vernal pools as named wetlands in the regulations will help protect them.

This bill, if enacted, would protect vernal pools and a 100-foot buffer around them whenever the vernal pool exceeds .05 acres and possesses one or more amphibian species (wood frogs, mole salamanders, etc.). It would also cost-effectively inventory vernal pools using new technologies that provide remote 1-meter topography and land cover.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.