



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 18, 2026

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.

Re: Fish and Wildlife - Endangered and Threatened Species and Migratory Birds - Regulations, Lists, Petitions, Essential Habitats, and Takings - HB 578 - Support

Chair Korman, Vice- Chair Guyton, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee vote favorably for Fish and Wildlife - Endangered and Threatened Species and Migratory Birds - Regulations, Lists, Petitions, Essential Habitats, and Takings – HB 578.

This bill requires the Secretary of Natural Resources to review and, if warranted, update certain regulations by July 1, 2033, and at least every ten years thereafter. It revises the types of impacts the Secretary may consider when making regulatory determinations, mandates the delisting of endangered or threatened species under specified circumstances, and establishes informational requirements for petitions seeking removal of a species from the protected list. The bill also authorizes the designation of up to ten areas as essential habitats for endangered and threatened species, prohibits the taking of certain migratory birds, and generally addresses issues related to fish, wildlife, and endangered and threatened species.

This proposed legislation is significant because it seeks to modernize and strengthen the implementation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through regular regulatory review, revised listing and delisting standards, and clearer consideration of economic and other impacts. By instituting a ten-year review cycle, the bill helps ensure that regulations reflect current scientific knowledge and evolving environmental conditions, reducing the risk of outdated or ineffective rules.

Expanding the range of impacts that may be considered—such as economic or national security factors—could lessen regulatory burdens on landowners, farmers, and developers while maintaining conservation goals. The requirement to delist species under certain conditions aims to streamline the process for removing protections once recovery objectives have been met or listing criteria no longer apply. Additionally, limiting the number of designated essential habitats allows for more targeted species protection while potentially increasing flexibility for development in non-designated areas. Finally, explicitly prohibiting the taking of certain migratory birds clarifies and reinforces existing protections, with implications for construction, energy development, and land management activities.

In closing, I would like to thank Delegate Palakovich Carr for sponsoring HB 578 and ask the committee to give this bill a favorable report.