



Testimony in Support of House Bill 779 – Natural Resources – Riverine Siting and Design Criteria – Requirements

February 23, 2026

To Chair Korman and members of the committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB779** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection organization on Maryland’s Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect Maryland’s Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.

House Bill 779 is a strong, forward-looking measure that builds on Maryland’s existing climate resilience framework by extending proven siting and design standards to riverine floodplains. Importantly, HB779 relies on the existing work and expertise of the **Coast Smart Council**, which has already developed comprehensive siting and design criteria for coastal flooding and sea level rise. By directing the council to adapt this framework for riverine flooding, the bill avoids unnecessary duplication, accelerates implementation, and ensures consistency across flood-risk planning efforts. The council’s collaborative structure — working in consultation with the Department of Natural Resources — positions it well to develop science-based criteria that reflect current data, modeling, and best practices.

HB779 also strikes an appropriate balance between resilience and feasibility. Its focus on larger, state-funded capital projects ensures that the policy targets projects with significant public investment and long-term public benefit. Requiring consideration of 500-year flood impacts is a prudent, forward-looking standard that will reduce costly repairs, disruptions, and environmental harm over time.

By strengthening how Maryland plans and builds in riverine areas, **House Bill 779 protects taxpayers, safeguards critical infrastructure, and advances the state’s commitment to climate resilience using tools that are already in place and proven to work.** For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for HB779.

Respectfully,

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper