



**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB431
Fish and Wildlife – Endangered and Threatened Species and Migratory Birds –
Regulations, Lists, Petitions, Essential Habitats, and Takings**

Environment and Transportation Committee
February 16, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB 578** on behalf of Assateague Coastal Trust.

Across Maryland, endangered and threatened species are increasingly facing intense pressure from development, urban sprawl, habitat loss, and sea level rise. **Each species, big or small, is a piece of the culture and heritage of Maryland.** Every species we lose represents the loss of a piece of our pride and history as Marylander's. It is imperative that we do everything in our power to ensure that our actions as human beings leave room for these iconic pieces of Maryland's natural history.

Assateague Coastal Trust is dedicated to its mission of conservation, preservation, and protection of the waterways of Worcester County and Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. Our work helps ensure that residents and visitors to Maryland's coast forever enjoy the resources provided by our coastal waters. We see this bill as a major step towards not only protecting important parts of Maryland's heritage, but as a means for conserving iconic landscapes.

Protection of habitat for endangered and threatened species has tremendous implications for water quality. Protecting these vulnerable species not only benefits water health, but benefits communities dependent on these resources, like our watermen.

The Lower Eastern Shore is home to critical habitats that sustain vulnerable species already under increasing pressure from sea level rise, habitat loss, and development. Species such as the Eastern Tiger Salamander, Saltmarsh Sparrow, and Diamondback Terrapin depend on strong, science-based protections to survive.

HB 578 ensures regular review of regulations, strengthens standards for listing and delisting, and promotes transparent, data-driven decision-making. These measures are essential to prevent premature removal of protections and to ensure conservation policies reflect current science and environmental realities.

Protecting endangered and threatened species safeguards not only wildlife, but also the ecological health and resilience of our coastal communities.

Assateague Coastal Trust urges a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on **HB 578**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Taylor Swanson", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Taylor Swanson,
Executive Director and Assateague COASTKEEPER
Assateague Coastal Trust