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Testimony in Support of HB779 – Natural Resources – Riverine Siting and Design Criteria - Requirements

Environment & Transportation Committee
February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB779**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs.

HB779 will result in a more resilient Maryland by taking a necessary step towards protecting our state's communities, infrastructure investments, and natural resources from increasing flood risks. Riverine flooding is becoming more frequent and severe due to changing weather patterns and development pressures. This bill will ensure our taxpayer-funded projects are at lower risk for damage or costly repairs from flooding.

The bill utilizes the existing Smart Coast Council to expand their existing siting and design criteria to also apply to certain state funded projects at risk to flooding. By utilizing the existing Council and seeking consultation with our State Departments, this bill ensures the expanded siting and design criteria will be practical, science-based, and aligned with existing standards.

This bill will place no burden on homeowners or developers, and instead ensures our community development projects that receive state funding are more resilient and lasting for our communities. The State Legislature created the Smart Coast Council, and this is the natural next step the Council and our state should be taking. Maryland is a leader in climate resilience and smart growth and this bill secures that.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports making our communities – both coastal and riverine – more resilient in the face of our changing climate and increased nuisance and storm flooding. For these reasons, we request a **favorable report** on HB779.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation