

CRITICAL AREA COALITION

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Dawn Stoltzfus, Maryland League of Conservation Voters, 410-562-5655 cell, dstoltzfus@mdlcv.org

GOVERNOR'S CRITICAL AREA BILL NEARS FINAL VOTE

Senate Prepares for Action after Big Victory in the House

(ANNAPOLIS, MD) – By a vote of 7 to 1 the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee today passed a bill introduced by Governor Martin O'Malley (SB 844/ HB1253) that would strengthen the state's Critical Area Act, which guides development within 1,000 feet of tidal waters in Maryland.

Voting yes were: Senators Carter Conway, Dyson, Lenett, Harrington, Pinsky, Rosapepe, Harris.

Voting no was Senator Greenip. Senator Colburn did not vote.

The Senate committee vote follows recent action by the House of Delegates that approved a similar measure by a margin of 115 to 22, indicating strong bi-partisan support for reform of the Critical Area Act before the full Senate takes up the bill in the remaining days of the legislative session.

The legislation calls for reducing pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's tidal streams by enacting tougher enforcement for those violating shoreline building requirements, improving standards for development near waterways, and more accurately mapping the "critical area."

The House passed the bill initially after working with stakeholders, including the Governor's office and the Critical Area Commission, to amend the legislation. The well-received amendments caused many groups to support the bill, including as Maryland State Builders Association, the Maryland Association of Counties, the Maryland Municipal League, and the Critical Area Coalition that represents more than 40 conservation organizations.

Senators report they are hearing little opposition to the legislation going in to the legislative session's final days. The full Senate may vote on the bill as early as Thursday and, in so doing, could pass a cornerstone piece of the O'Malley Administration's environmental legislative agenda.

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For More Information Contact:

Kim Coble, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, (410) 268-8816, kcoble@cbf.org
Dru Schmidt-Perkins, 1000 Friends of Maryland, (410) 258-8601, dru@friendsofmd.org
Cindy Schwartz, Maryland League of Conservation Voters, 240-535-6050, CSchwartz@mdlcv.org
Brad Heavner, Environment Maryland, (410) 467-0439, bsh@environmentmaryland.org
Bob Gallagher, West/Rhode Riverkeeper, Inc., (301) 261-5021, riverkeeper@comcast.net
Jay Falstad, Queen Anne's Conservation Association, (410) 928-3505, jfalstad@yahoo.com