

August 30, 2022

Bill No. 57-22: Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Protection – Water Dependent Facilities - Exemptions
Position: OPPOSE

Dear County Councilmembers,

The undersigned organizations urge you to oppose Bill No. 57-22, which would threaten local water quality by weakening bedrock environmental protections.

The Maryland General Assembly passed the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Law in 1984 to ensure that development and land use practices near the water do not pollute the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.¹ Each jurisdiction in Maryland, including Baltimore County, is required to enforce their respective Critical Area.² Bill No. 57-22 represents a dramatic change to longstanding environmental protections and could set a dangerous precedent for Chesapeake Bay protections across Maryland.

Bill No. 57-22 would exempt waterfront businesses from mitigation requirements under the Critical Area Protection Law and remove the 100-foot Buffer that currently prohibits development on the shoreline. These changes would enable developers to build out their facilities to the water's edge without any mitigation requirements. Furthermore, the "shall" language in the bill removes the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' discretion to make the best decision on behalf of the impacted environment and would eliminate the public's ability to have input on these decisions.

Bill No. 57-22 puts developers' interests over environmental protection, removes critical oversight mechanisms, and would almost certainly lead to degradation of local water quality. This legislation would make Baltimore County the weakest enforcer of Critical Areas amongst Maryland's 24 jurisdictions. Additionally, it likely violates state law.³

We urge you to soundly reject Bill No. 57-22.

Signed,

Audubon Mid-Atlantic
Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group
Blue Water Baltimore
Chapman Forest Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Conservancy
Clean Water Action
Corsica River Conservancy

¹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. (n.d.). [Compliance: Enforcement in the Critical Area](#).

² Baltimore County Government. (2022). [Chesapeake Bay Critical Area](#).

³ Taylor DeVille. (2022). [Attorney general opinion: 'Significant possibility' Baltimore County bill would violate Maryland environmental rules](#). The Baltimore Banner.

Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek
Friends of St Clements Bay
Friends of the Nanticoke River
Maryland Climate Justice Wing
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Mattawoman Watershed Society
NAACP Maryland State Conference
National Parks Conservation Association
NeighborSpace of Baltimore County
Queen Anne's Conservation Association
Sierra Club Greater Baltimore Group
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
St. Mary's River Watershed Association
Valleys Planning Council
Wicomico Environmental Trust