



**HCCA**

**Howard County Citizens Association**

*Since 1961... The Voice of the People of Howard County*

Date: 27 February 2026

Subject: SB688-2026 introduced by Senator Mary Washington. HCCA Testimony

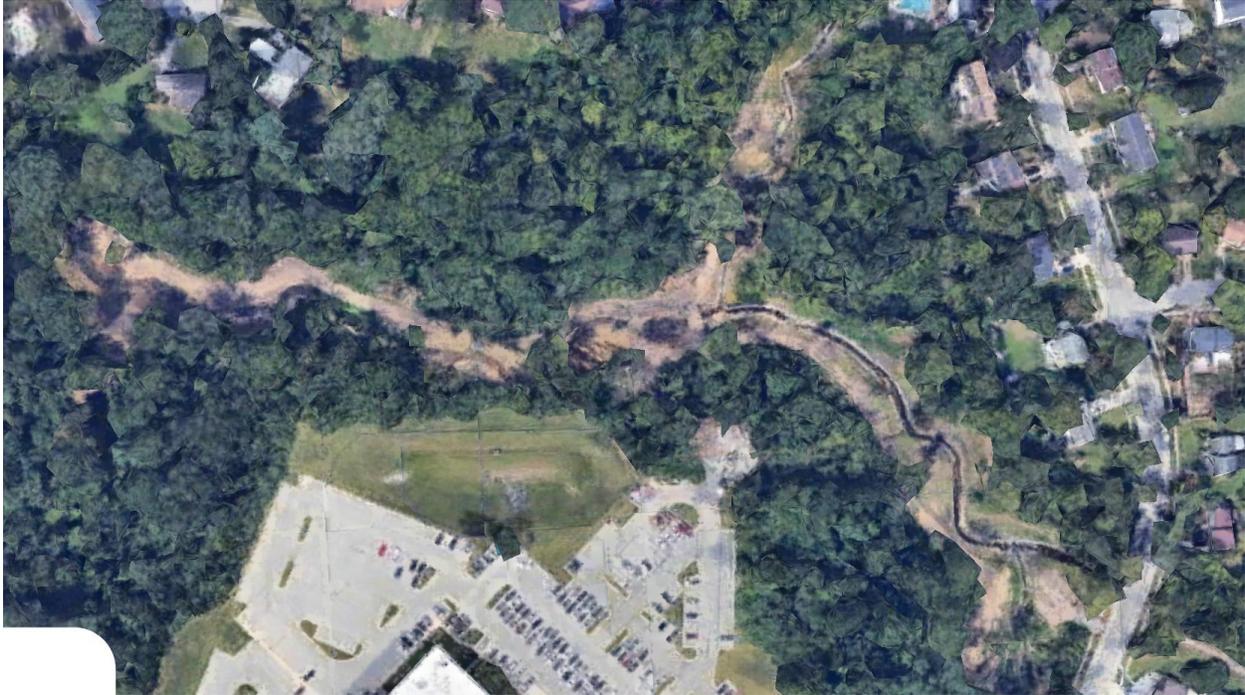
The Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA, recommends **APPROVAL** of SB688-2026. We support SB688 as it will “protect and enhance the environment” and save millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money because it prevents problems by emulating the forest in the upland watersheds.

In the past we have seen many so called “watershed restoration projects” implemented that have been counterproductive and unfortunately fail to “protect and enhance the environment”. These projects cost millions of dollars. Millions of dollars have literally been washed down the drain.

Here are just two examples where projects failed to “protect and enhance the environment”.

The Red Hill Branch project in Ellicott City failed dramatically, the Columbia Association, CA Watershed Manager took me on tour of the site after the first storm and witnessed the newly planted trees and shrubs along the stream had been washed away! In May 2021 the Center for Watershed Protection along with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin reported in their study of the effectiveness of restorations said.... “The Red Hill Branch displayed consistently worse biological health than the control watersheds”

More recently Mellen Court Capital Project D-1158 in Columbia was completed, there was wholesale destruction of trees and shrubs which did little to nothing to improve water quality. This photo of the site says it all, you can clearly see where the forest was destroyed! To make matters worse the established trees are replaced by much smaller trees having failed to take root!



This bill will put our taxpayers' dollars where it will do best by promoting forests to soak up and retain the flow of rain.

This legislation is designed to change how Maryland entities meet state-level stormwater and water quality goals, prioritizing long-term ecological health over certain, more invasive restoration methods. It aims to restrict the use of certain stream and floodplain restoration projects by fulfilling environmental permits and mitigation requirements. It prioritizes on-site, nature-based stormwater management over heavy-engineering, with an effective date of October 1, 2026.

This legislation is designed to change how Maryland entities meet state-level stormwater and water quality goals, prioritizing long-term ecological health over certain, more invasive restoration methods. Your **APPROVAL** of SB688-2026 would lead to better stewardship of our environment.

Thank You,

Brian England HCCA Board Member