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**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB464 - “Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission – Mandatory Referral Review”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: March 2, 2021**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB464, which would strengthen the public project review process by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), a bi-county agency serving Montgomery and Prince George’s counties.

Proposed state and local government development and construction projects in the two counties which are subject to “mandatory referral review” by M-NCPPC include acquiring or selling land; constructing or authorizing a public structure, road, park, or other public way; and widening, narrowing, extending or relocating a road, park or other public way.

Under current law, a mandatory referral from a government agency is deemed approved by M-NCPPC when 60 days have elapsed after a referral application was submitted if there is a disagreement over the completeness of the application. HB464 would close that loophole by establishing guidelines that define what a complete referral application must include before it can be accepted for review. The bill also designates timelines and communication to the applicant by M-NCPPC that must follow receipt of a mandatory referral.

Proposed state and local government development and construction projects may impact public health and safety, the environment, property values, and other aspects of residents’ lives. Consequently, it is important that mandatory referrals contain all the relevant information M-NCPPC needs to conduct a thorough analysis, and also that there is an opportunity for a public hearing before proposed public projects are approved.

In summary, HB464 would improve the mandatory review process by M-NCPPC for proposed public projects in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties, and has the support of the legislative delegations in both counties. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.