

# HOUSE BILL 503

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By: **Delegates Stein, Lehman, Addison, Allen, Boyce, Bridges, Edelson, Healey, Ruth, Smith, and Stewart**

Introduced and read first time: January 30, 2023

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity Program – Establishment**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Greenspace Equity Program in the Department of  
4 Natural Resources to provide grants to eligible applicants for enhancing the public  
5 health and livability of overburdened communities and underserved communities by  
6 implementing projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace;  
7 requiring the Department to submit each grant award to the Board of Public Works  
8 for approval before awarding a grant under the Program; requiring the Board of  
9 Public Works to approve or deny a proposed grant award submitted by the  
10 Department; establishing the Greenspace Equity Advisory Board in the Department  
11 to serve as a consultant to the Department in the implementation and  
12 administration of the Program; and generally relating to the Greenspace Equity  
13 Program.

14 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
15 Article – Environment  
16 Section 1–701(a)(1), (7), and (8)  
17 Annotated Code of Maryland  
18 (2013 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

19 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
20 Article – Natural Resources  
21 Section 5–903(a)(1) and (2)(i)  
22 Annotated Code of Maryland  
23 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

24 BY repealing  
25 Article – Natural Resources  
26 Section 5–903(a)(2)(vi)  
27 Annotated Code of Maryland

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

2 BY adding to

3 Article – Natural Resources

4 Section 5–903(a)(2)(vi); and 5–9D–01 through 5–9D–04 to be under the new subtitle

5 “Subtitle 9D. Greenspace Equity Program”

6 Annotated Code of Maryland

7 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

8 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

9 Article – Real Property

10 Section 14–501

11 Annotated Code of Maryland

12 (2015 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Environment**

16 1–701.

17 (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

18 (7) “Overburdened community” means any census tract for which three or  
19 more of the following environmental health indicators are above the 75th percentile  
20 statewide:

21 (i) Particulate matter (PM) 2.5;

22 (ii) Ozone;

23 (iii) National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) diesel PM;

24 (iv) NATA cancer risk;

25 (v) NATA respiratory hazard index;

26 (vi) Traffic proximity;

27 (vii) Lead paint indicator;

28 (viii) National Priorities List Superfund site proximity;

29 (ix) Risk Management Plan facility proximity;

30 (x) Hazardous waste proximity;

- 1 (xi) Wastewater discharge indicator;
- 2 (xii) Proximity to a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO);
- 3 (xiii) Percent of the population lacking broadband coverage;
- 4 (xiv) Asthma emergency room discharges;
- 5 (xv) Myocardial infarction discharges;
- 6 (xvi) Low-birth-weight infants;
- 7 (xvii) Proximity to emitting power plants;
- 8 (xviii) Proximity to a Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) facility;
- 9 (xix) Proximity to a brownfields site;
- 10 (xx) Proximity to mining operations; and
- 11 (xxi) Proximity to a hazardous waste landfill.

12 (8) "Underserved community" means any census tract in which, according  
13 to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau Survey:

- 14 (i) At least 25% of the residents qualify as low-income;
- 15 (ii) At least 50% of the residents identify as nonwhite; or
- 16 (iii) At least 15% of the residents have limited English proficiency.

## 17 Article – Natural Resources

18 5–903.

19 (a) (1) (i) Of the funds distributed to Program Open Space under § 13–209  
20 of the Tax – Property Article, up to \$3,000,000 may be transferred by an appropriation in  
21 the State budget, or by an amendment to the State budget under Title 7, Subtitle 2 of the  
22 State Finance and Procurement Article, to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority  
23 Financing Fund established under Title 13, Subtitle 11 of the Financial Institutions Article  
24 to be used for the purposes provided in that subtitle.

25 (ii) Of the amount transferred under subparagraph (i) of this  
26 paragraph, up to \$300,000 may be distributed to the Maryland Historical Trust within the  
27 Department of Planning to be awarded as noncapital historic preservation grants.

1 (2) (i) 1. Of the remaining funds not appropriated under paragraph  
2 (1) of this subsection:

3 A. One half of the funds shall be used for recreation and open  
4 space purposes by the Department and the Historic St. Mary's City Commission; and

5 B. 20% of the funds or \$21,000,000, whichever is greater,  
6 shall be appropriated to the Forest and Park Service in the Department to operate State  
7 forests and parks.

8 2. Except as otherwise provided in this section, any funds the  
9 General Assembly appropriates to the State under this subsection shall be used only for  
10 land acquisition projects.

11 [(vi) For each of fiscal years 2010 through 2015, \$1,217,000 of the  
12 State's share of funds available under subparagraph (i)1A of this paragraph may be  
13 appropriated in the budgets of the Department, the Department of General Services, and  
14 the Department of Planning for expenses necessary to administer this Program.]

15 (VI) A PORTION OF THE STATE'S SHARE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE  
16 UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I)1A OF THIS PARAGRAPH FOR THIS PROGRAM SHALL BE  
17 TRANSFERRED BY AN APPROPRIATION IN THE STATE BUDGET TO THE GREENSPACE  
18 EQUITY PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER SUBTITLE 9D OF THIS TITLE AS FOLLOWS:

19 1. FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025, \$5,000,000;

20 2. FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026, \$7,000,000; AND

21 3. FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR  
22 THEREAFTER, \$10,000,000.

23 SUBTITLE 9D. GREENSPACE EQUITY PROGRAM.

24 5-9D-01.

25 (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
26 INDICATED.

27 (B) "BOARD" MEANS THE GREENSPACE EQUITY ADVISORY BOARD.

28 (C) (1) "COMMUNITY GREENSPACE" MEANS A COMMUNITY SPACE THAT  
29 ENHANCES THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND LIVABILITY OF AN OVERBURDENED  
30 COMMUNITY OR AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.

31 (2) "COMMUNITY GREENSPACE" INCLUDES:

1 (I) A COMMUNITY GARDEN;

2 (II) A COMMUNITY GATHERING OPEN SPACE AREA;

3 (III) A COMMUNITY WOODLAND;

4 (IV) A GREEN NETWORK;

5 (V) A PARK;

6 (VI) A TRAIL; AND

7 (VII) AN URBAN FARM.

8 (D) “ELIGIBLE APPLICANT” MEANS:

9 (1) A LAND TRUST OR NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION LOCATED  
10 OR WORKING IN AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY OR AN UNDERSERVED  
11 COMMUNITY WHERE A PROJECT IS PROPOSED TO BE IMPLEMENTED; OR

12 (2) A COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY.

13 (E) “GREEN NETWORK” MEANS A SYSTEM OF GREENSPACES THAT ARE  
14 INTERCONNECTED BY LINEAR CORRIDORS THAT FACILITATE THE MOVEMENT OF  
15 PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE.

16 (F) “LAND TRUST” MEANS AN ORGANIZATION THAT:

17 (1) IS A QUALIFIED ORGANIZATION UNDER § 170(H)(3) OF THE  
18 INTERNAL REVENUE CODE AND ANY REGULATIONS ADOPTED UNDER THAT  
19 SECTION;

20 (2) HAS EXECUTED A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE  
21 MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST; OR

22 (3) IS AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAND TRUST AS DEFINED IN §  
23 14-501 OF THE REAL PROPERTY ARTICLE.

24 (G) “OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 1-701  
25 OF THE ENVIRONMENT ARTICLE.

26 (H) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE GREENSPACE EQUITY PROGRAM.

1 (I) "STEWARDSHIP" MEANS ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN TO MAINTAIN THE  
2 CONSERVATION VALUES AND PUBLIC USE OF A PROPERTY.

3 (J) "UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 1-701 OF  
4 THE ENVIRONMENT ARTICLE.

5 5-9D-02.

6 (A) THERE IS A GREENSPACE EQUITY PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.

7 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ENHANCE THE PUBLIC HEALTH  
8 AND LIVABILITY OF OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES AND UNDERSERVED  
9 COMMUNITIES BY IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS TO PRESERVE, CREATE, AND ENHANCE  
10 COMMUNITY GREENSPACE.

11 (C) (1) THE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT.

12 (2) IN ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAM, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL:

13 (I) DEVELOP A GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE PROGRAM;

14 (II) PUBLICIZE THE PROGRAM;

15 (III) PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO PROGRAM  
16 APPLICANTS;

17 (IV) AWARD GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS; AND

18 (V) CONSULT WITH THE BOARD.

19 (D) A GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE  
20 PROGRAM SHALL INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
21 AND THE OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY OR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY IN WHICH  
22 THE PROJECT WILL BE LOCATED.

23 (E) (1) (I) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2025, THE DEPARTMENT  
24 SHALL MAKE GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS FOR GREENSPACE EQUITY  
25 PROJECTS LOCATED:

26 1. IN AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY;

27 2. IN AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY; OR

1                                   **3. ON A PROPERTY THAT:**

2                                   **A. IS OWNED OR MANAGED BY AN ELIGIBLE APPLICANT;**  
3 **AND**

4                                   **B. IS ADJACENT TO AND SERVES AN OVERBURDENED**  
5 **COMMUNITY OR AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.**

6                                   **(II) 1. EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSUBPARAGRAPH 2 OF**  
7 **THIS SUBPARAGRAPH, AT LEAST 50% OF THE GRANTS AWARDED EACH FISCAL YEAR**  
8 **SHALL BE AWARDED TO PROJECTS THAT INCLUDE LAND ACQUISITION BY LAND**  
9 **TRUSTS OR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.**

10                                   **2. IF THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF FUNDS REQUESTED FOR**  
11 **LAND ACQUISITION BY PROGRAM APPLICANTS IS LESS THAN 50% OF THE GRANT**  
12 **FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR A GIVEN FISCAL YEAR, THE REMAINING GRANT FUNDS MAY**  
13 **BE AWARDED TO PROJECTS THAT DO NOT INCLUDE LAND ACQUISITION.**

14                                   **(2) A GRANT RECEIVED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION MAY BE USED FOR:**

15                                   **(I) LAND ACQUISITION, APPRAISALS, ENVIRONMENTAL**  
16 **ASSESSMENTS, SITE CLEARANCE OR DEVELOPMENT, AND OTHER EXPENSES AND**  
17 **MATERIALS RELATED TO PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING A PROJECT, INCLUDING**  
18 **STEWARDSHIP OF THE SITE;**

19                                   **(II) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS IN AN AMOUNT NOT MORE THAN**  
20 **5% OF THE TOTAL PROJECT COST, OR \$20,000, WHICHEVER IS LESS; OR**

21                                   **(III) STEWARDSHIP OF A PROJECT THAT:**

22                                   **1. PREVIOUSLY RECEIVED A GRANT UNDER THE**  
23 **PROGRAM; OR**

24                                   **2. WOULD QUALIFY FOR A GRANT UNDER THE PROGRAM**  
25 **BUT EXISTED BEFORE JULY 1, 2025.**

26                                   **(3) IN AWARDING GRANTS UNDER THIS SUBSECTION, THE**  
27 **DEPARTMENT SHALL CONSIDER:**

28                                   **(I) THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROJECT ENGAGES AND IS**  
29 **SUPPORTED BY RESIDENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND BUSINESSES LOCATED IN THE**  
30 **OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY OR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY:**

1                   1.     **IN WHICH THE PROJECT WILL BE LOCATED; OR**

2                   2.     **THAT IS SERVED BY THE PROJECT;**

3                   **(II) THE AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL OR IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS**  
4 **FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT, IF ANY; AND**

5                   **(III) THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PROJECT:**

6                   1.     **DEMONSTRATES PARTNERSHIPS AND**  
7 **COLLABORATION AMONG LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, LAND TRUSTS,**  
8 **NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS; AND**

9                   2.     **ENHANCES THE PUBLIC HEALTH, LIVABILITY, AND**  
10 **GREENSPACE IN THE OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY OR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY:**

11                  A.     **IN WHICH THE PROJECT WILL BE LOCATED; OR**

12                  B.     **THAT IS SERVED BY THE PROJECT.**

13 **5-9D-03.**

14                  **(A) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT EACH PROPOSED GRANT**  
15 **AWARD TO THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR APPROVAL BEFORE AWARDING A**  
16 **GRANT UNDER THE PROGRAM.**

17                  **(2) THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS SHALL APPROVE OR DENY A**  
18 **PROPOSED GRANT AWARD SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT UNDER THE**  
19 **PROGRAM.**

20                  **(B) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT ALL GRANT APPLICATIONS**  
21 **UNDER THE PROGRAM TO THE FOLLOWING ENTITIES FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT:**

22                   **(I) THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;**

23                   **(II) THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY**  
24 **DEVELOPMENT;**

25                   **(III) THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING;**

26                   **(IV) THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH; AND**



1 (V) UNLESS THE APPLICANT IS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT, THE  
2 COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY IN WHICH THE PROJECT WILL BE LOCATED.

3 (2) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONSULT WITH STATE OR LOCAL  
4 AGENCIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS NECESSARY IN THE EVALUATION OF  
5 COMMENTS RECEIVED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

6 5-9D-04.

7 (A) THERE IS A GREENSPACE EQUITY ADVISORY BOARD IN THE  
8 DEPARTMENT.

9 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE BOARD IS TO SERVE AS A CONSULTANT TO THE  
10 DEPARTMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM.

11 (C) THE BOARD CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

12 (1) ONE MEMBER OF THE SENATE OF MARYLAND, APPOINTED BY THE  
13 PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE;

14 (2) ONE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES, APPOINTED BY THE  
15 SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE; AND

16 (3) THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS, APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR:

17 (I) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF A COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
18 PARKS AND RECREATION;

19 (II) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF A MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT OF  
20 PARKS AND RECREATION;

21 (III) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND  
22 ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST;

23 (IV) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF A LAND TRUST WORKING IN AN  
24 OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY OR AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY; AND

25 (V) FIVE REPRESENTATIVES WHO:

26 1. ARE RESIDENTS OF AN OVERBURDENED COMMUNITY  
27 OR AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY; AND

28 2. REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF THE STATE.



1 housing land trust, or for which the affordable housing land trust has a proprietary or  
2 reversionary interest, that:

3 (1) Grants the affordable housing land trust a preemptive right to purchase  
4 or repurchase the property, including any improvements on the property;

5 (2) Contains language restricting the transfer, lease, sublease, assignment,  
6 or occupancy of the property with regard to:

7 (i) Potential transferees, sublessees, assignees, or occupants; and

8 (ii) The price at which the property may be transferred; or

9 (3) Imposes other conditions on the use or transfer of the property that  
10 would trigger a reversionary interest and that are designed to ensure that the property  
11 remains available and affordable to low-income families and moderate-income families.

12 (d) “Family” means a household consisting of one or more individuals.

13 (e) “Low-income family” means a household with an income that does not exceed  
14 80% of the area median income for a household of the same size.

15 (f) “Moderate-income family” means a household with an income that does not  
16 exceed 140% of the area median income for a household of the same size.

17 (g) “Nonprofit status” means the recognition by the Internal Revenue Service that  
18 an affordable housing land trust is exempt from taxation under § 501(c)(2), (3), or (4) of the  
19 Internal Revenue Code.

20 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June  
21 1, 2023.