

SB 925 testimony - Ches Bay Trust.pdf

Uploaded by: Davis, Jana

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 925 (Senator Elfreth) – Workgroup on Public Water Access Written Testimony

Date: March 4, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

Submitted to: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Submitted by: Jana Davis, Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust supports its workgroup coordination role outlined in SB 925. The Trust is a grant-making organization established by the General Assembly in 1985 with a mission that includes engaging the public in the restoration and protection of the natural resources of our region. Our 2020-2025 strategic plan articulates a goal to reach under-engaged audiences for mission-related reasons: A large portion of the watershed is privately owned, and for our natural resources to be restored and protected, a large number and diverse range of people need to be engaged and take actions and change behaviors. One cannot love what one cannot know, and so access to natural resources is an important step. The elements to be accomplished by the workgroup as outlined in the bill are, in turn, an important step in assessing and improving, as necessary, access.

Of course, the issue of access is not just about people improving natural resources; it's about natural resources improving people, also. All residents of our region have the ability to benefit our natural resources, and healthy natural resources, in turn, have the ability to benefit all residents as well. More and more science supports the connection between access to healthy outdoor spaces and human health.

Human health connection

The theme of the Chesapeake Bay Trust's annual Maryland General Assembly legislative "reception" (virtual this year due to COVID) in January 2021 was the value of the outdoors, and legislators were each asked to share an outdoor spot they visited to enjoy or feel better – old favorites or new finds - given that so many indoor arenas like malls and theatres were closed. Over 60 legislators participated, enthusiastically sharing well past the hour scheduled for the event, and we had multiple requests to share a list of the various parks and sites offered by their colleagues. (And even offers to take other legislators fishing!)



As with Maryland General Assembly members, use of existing outdoor spaces by the general public has also been skyrocketing since spring 2020. Around the world, managers of parks report attendance has been at all time highs. Fishing license applications have increased. Going fishing at old secret spots that used to be isolated now results in meeting crowds. The reason these outdoor sites, like forests and parks and trails, have become so popular this year is not just because indoor venues were closed and there was nowhere else to go: It is because human health is so closely linked to access to healthy outdoor spaces, and people are starting to realize that at all levels.



Links between spending time outdoors in nature and human physical and mental health started to be quantified by scientists even before COVID-19¹²³⁴. People who spend more time outdoors have lower levels of stress hormones, healthier blood chemistry, and better mental health. Crime is lower and reported “happiness” is higher in urban areas with green and blue spaces than in settings without such spaces. Healthier workforces take 27% fewer sick days, contributing more to their employers’ bottom lines⁵, and healthier populations save billions in health care costs⁶, and so time in nature has begun to be examined as a preventative health care measure. ParksRx in which doctors prescribe time in nature to patients. Programs that promote outdoor time as part of anti-obesity programs for children have been initiated.

COVID-19 brought the issue of getting outdoors to the mainstream in a number of ways. First, mortality rate of



COVID has been linked to factors such as obesity, diabetes, and other general health issues. People who spend time outdoors are healthier; therefore, people who spend more time outdoors should be able to fend off viruses like the novel coronavirus better. We know people in communities of color have a higher rate of mortality from COVID, and we know people in underserved communities have limited access to healthy outdoor spaces.

¹ Wolf KL, Robbins AS. 2015. Metro nature, environmental health, and economic value. *Environ Health Perspect* 123:390–398; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1408216>

² South et al., 2018, **Effect of Greening Vacant Land on Mental Health of Community-Dwelling Adults: A Cluster Randomized Trial.** *JAMA Netw Open.* 2018;1(3):e180298. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.0298

³ White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J. *et al.* 2019. Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. *Sci Rep* 9, 7730. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-44097-3>

⁴ Spending Just 20 Minutes in a Park Makes You Happier. Here's What Else Being Outside Can Do for Your Health. 2019. *Time* magazine <https://time.com/5539942/green-space-health-wellness/>.

⁵ R Merrill et al., 2011. Effectiveness of a Workplace Wellness Program for Maintaining Health and Promoting Healthy Behaviors. *J Occupational and Env Medicine* 53(7): 782-787.

⁶ T. Maxwell. 2013. A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Health Care Models – Lessons Learned on the Importance of a Localized Preventative Care in Reducing Chronic Disease. *12 J. Int'l Bus. & L.* 443

Work to make sure that healthy outdoor spaces are available and accessible to all populations is imperative.

About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a non-profit grant-making organization with a goal to increase stewardship and public engagement in the restoration of the state's local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that could complement state agency work and reach large numbers of groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$120 million through more than 12,000 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985. We make 350-400 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active grantees at any one time.

The Trust does not currently receive a direct state appropriation, instead supported through revenue from the Chesapeake Bay vehicle license plate; half of the Chesapeake and Endangered Species Fund checkoff on the state income tax form; two new donation options through Maryland's online boating, fishing, hunting license system, one that focuses on veterans' rehabilitation; partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, family foundations, and corporate foundations; and individual donors.

The types of projects supported by the Trust include urban tree plantings, stream and park clean-ups, wetlands restoration, living shorelines, oyster seeding, local stream water quality monitoring, and outdoor educational experiences for children and adults. The Trust's programs reach about 80,000 K-12 students and 20,000 adult volunteers each year. Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

One of the Trust's basic tenants in its strategic plan is to engage under-engaged audiences in natural resources issues. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources. Three under-engaged audiences of particular focus identified by our Diversity and Inclusion Committee are the faith-based sector, communities of color, and the human health sector. The Trust has seen much



success: The number of students, volunteers, and teachers of color engaged in our grants match the demographics of Maryland. Close to 10% of our grants supported work at faith-based institutions of 13 different religions. We make grants for work at hospitals and other human health centers, but would like to do more.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present to the Committee. If you should have any questions regarding the Trust's testimony, please contact me 410-974-2941 x100 or jdavis@cbtrust.org.

SB925_SenElfreth-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Elfreth, Sarah

Position: FAV

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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Sarah.Elfreth@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 4, 2021

**Testimony in Favor of SB925
Workgroup on Public Water Access**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 925, legislation to create a Workgroup on Public Water Access to broadly study and reexamine our State's public water access opportunities and develop recommendations for State and Local governments to increase water access in our State.

We can all agree that one of Maryland's greatest treasures is the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding tributaries -- it is a vital aspect of our culture, history, and economy. It is imperative that this General Assembly ensure that Marylanders in each and every corner of the State have equitable and readily available access to the waters of our Bay. By providing increased public access we can continue to build the relationship between citizens and our waters, ensuring that our common goals of restoring the health of the Bay remains a top priority for all.

The need for this bill is even more urgent as demand for public water access has never been higher -- the COVID-19 pandemic has caused Marylanders to increasingly seek opportunities for outdoor engagement. In a recent Chesapeake Conservancy Conservation Innovation Center Report, park utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic increased by 86.97%¹. It is my hope that this desire for increased access does not fade away once this pandemic is concluded, and in turn we must ensure that we do all we can to expand public water access for the future.

Additionally, we also must recognize that every Marylander does not have equal access to our waters -- and for far too many minority and low income communities, access to the Bay is not available. My District is a victim of this very issue where a majority of waterfront property - once communities of color - is now privately owned and not available to all. In this year of social action to ensure equity in our State, this legislation will bring groups to the table and build recommendations that equitably increase access.

¹ <https://www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/2020/07/22/chesapeake-conservancy-studies-park-mobility-during-covid-19/>

This legislation is perfectly timed with federal action. The Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law in August and will ensure a significant increase in funding for public green spaces. In 2013, the National Park Service published a report on public water access in watershed states - that report, linked below, found that Maryland has 7,719 miles of shoreline but only 629 public access sites. The NPS report also highlighted the need for increased public water access in Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, and on the Eastern Shore².

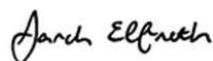
With this demand and urgency in mind, we have an opportunity to form a representative work group of stakeholders to convene and make recommendations on policy actions we can take at a State and local level to expand public water access. This legislation calls for such a work group to be staffed by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, of experts and community representatives.

This workgroup is charged with:

1. Examining our current public water access opportunities and the quality, geographic diversity, and equity of public water access sites.
2. Studying whether public water access opportunities can be increased through conservation of land, coordination with federal agencies, or opening more areas.
3. Studying and recommending infrastructure upgrades that will increase the activation - such as kayak launches, fishing piers, or picnic tables - of public water access sites.
4. Exploring new water access opportunities with a focus on accessibility and transportation availability, and
5. Developing a list of policy tools that State and local governments may use to expand public water access.

The Chesapeake Bay is too great a treasure to privatize. This General Assembly has taken incredible action to restore and protect the health of the Bay - we must do more to ensure all Marylanders can also enjoy this national treasure. I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 945.

Sincerely,



Sarah Elfreth

² https://federalleadership.chesapeakebay.net/Public_Access_Plan_FINAL.pdf

3.2.21 letter to Chair and Vice Chair EHEA Committ

Uploaded by: Perry, Reed

Position: FAV

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March 2, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee
Maryland Senate
Miller Senate Office Building 2 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan Vice Chair
Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee
Maryland Senate
Miller Senate Office Building 2 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pinsky and Vice Chair Kagan,

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I would like to express our support for SB 925 which would establish a workgroup on public water access in the State of Maryland.

As you know, the Chesapeake Bay, along with the Bay's rivers and tributaries, represents one of Maryland's greatest and most treasured natural resources. In addition to policy and funding efforts to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay, it is critical that we also work to increase and improve public water access to the Bay and its tributaries. In fact, increasing public water access points is a core goal of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement as a means to benefit the public and local economies and to inspire people to become conservation stewards.

Outdoor recreation and public water access are particularly important from an economic perspective. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor recreation in Maryland contributes more than \$7 billion annually in value-added to the economy, directly employing nearly 90,000 with nearly \$4 billion in compensation. Boating and fishing in Maryland are the biggest activities contributing to this economic impact.

Chesapeake Conservancy, together with partners like the National Park Service, has been working diligently to create new public access points and to create new opportunities for outdoor recreation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The substantial growth in demand by Marylanders for parks and outdoor recreation has amplified the need for more public water access points. Furthermore, there is an imminent need to create public water access points and to support recreational opportunities in underserved communities.

SB 925 would appropriately respond to this need by establishing a workgroup on public water access which will convene a diverse group of stakeholders to consider means of improving public water access and to provide recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly. This legislation is also timely, as the Chesapeake Bay community nears the 2025 deadline for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

Thank you for considering this important legislation, and I urge your support for SB 925.

Sincerely,



Joel Dunn
President and CEO
Chesapeake Conservancy

SB 925 03-04-2021 FAV_MTAM.pdf

Uploaded by: Zellers, Susan

Position: FAV



March 4, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Senate Bill 925 –Workgroup on Public Water Access
Support**

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of the Marine Trades Association of Maryland, I am writing in support of SB 925 which will study and make recommendations regarding public access to Maryland waterways. The recreational boating industry is a \$3.5 billion industry in Maryland representing nearly \$18,000 jobs. With 3,190 miles of shoreline, our waterways and watersports are a big part of who we are and why people choose Maryland as their home.

Nationally, in 2020, boat sales were up by 12% and paddle sports such as kayaking which had faced declines before the pandemic increased 56%. There is no better time than now to study how we might better serve Marylanders with more public access to our waters.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Susan Zellers
Executive Director, MTAM

cc: Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

SB 925 Public Water SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Clark, Robin Jessica

Position: FWA



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 925

Workgroup on Public Water Access

Date: March 4, 2021

To: Senate Education, Health and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: **Support with amendment**

From: Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS SB 925 WITH AMENDMENT**. This legislation establishes a Workgroup on Public Water Access to help expand public water access throughout Maryland with a particular focus on making water ways more accessible to public transit ridership. An amendment would ensure environmental consideration during public water access expansions.

Expanding public water access through public transit improves equity and helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Public water access is a priority for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). CBF strongly supports the expansion of public water access through public transit as a way to improve equity in water access and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from personal vehicles.

CBF works to expand access to the water through environmental education programs and advocacy. Positive experiences on the Chesapeake Bay help reinforce the importance of preserving Maryland's national treasure. This bill may help increase environmental awareness regarding the Bay through expanding access to waterways, many of them tributaries to the Chesapeake.

Environmental integrity of marshes, wetlands, and shoreline areas should be considered as public water access is expanded

CBF hopes the Workgroup envisioned in this legislation considers preserving the environmental integrity of marshes, wetlands, and shoreline areas alongside studying ways to expand water access, the Workgroup. These areas are fragile habitats within the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The following amendment would help ensure this consideration:

Page 5, Line 24-25:

The Workgroup shall: (3) study and recommend infrastructure upgrades that will increase the availability of public water access **while preserving the environmental integrity of access sites;**

Page 6, Line 16-17:

(2) The final report shall include: (ii) model plans that State and local governments may use to increase the availability of public water access **while preserving the environmental integrity of access sites;**

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 925 WITH AMENDMENT. For more information, contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney, at rclark@cbf.org or 443.995.8753.

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SB 925 Workgroup on Public Water Access (Favorable

Uploaded by: Kerr, Cait

Position: FWA

Thursday March 4, 2021

TO: Paul Pinsky, Chair of Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and Committee Members

FROM: Caitlin Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Favorable with Amendment SB 925 Workgroup on Public Water Access

The Nature Conservancy (the Conservancy) supports, with an amendment, SB 925 offered by Senator Elfreth. SB 925 seeks to reverse existing inequities in public water access across Maryland through establishing a diverse and inclusive workgroup to study and recommend methods to increase public water access and ensure equitable opportunities to receive the benefits that public water access provides.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the impacts that lack of access to green spaces has in our communities. Green spaces are essential to physical and mental health, especially at a time when indoor public spaces can pose health risks, particularly to immunocompromised individuals. Public water access locations provide invaluable opportunities for recreation, socialization, and education; our waterways are some of our state's most treasured assets. Increasing our waterways' and natural resources' prevalence and accessibility also promotes environmental stewardship by instilling a greater sense of public responsibility for preserving these natural assets.

We know that intense collaboration between frontline communities, governments, large and small non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private financing is essential to achieve the transformational change that is necessary to create equitable access to natural resources, green spaces, and all of the benefits that those assets provide. Water is intrinsically tied to culture, livelihoods, food, wildlife habitat, and survival. Every community has a stake in water access and many communities have been historically excluded from these conversations. That is why we would recommend an amendment to this legislation to include in the workgroup one representative of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs designated by the Chair of the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs. This would allow Maryland's indigenous communities to also have a seat at the table and allow the workgroup insight into the educational, social, and economic needs of indigenous people when studying and making recommendations about public water access.

The Conservancy commends Senator Elfreth for working to reverse existing inequities in public water access in our state and strongly encourages the Committee to consider an amendment to include indigenous representation on the workgroup, which would strengthen the intent of the bill to create a diverse and inclusive conversation.

Therefore, we urge a favorable with amendment report on SB 925.