



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 1358

Natural Resources - Gwynns Falls State Park - Focus Group, Advisory Committee, and Report

Date: April 2, 2024

Position: **Favorable**

To: Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

From: Julieta Rodrigo
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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 1358 which requires the Department of Natural Resources and Baltimore City government to jointly engage in a stakeholder-driven process to map out the priority needs and associated costs related to establishment of a Gwynns Falls State Park.

Parks Increase the Health of the Chesapeake Bay Ecosystem and its Residents:

The preservation and stewardship of parks and green spaces furthers the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. Through their forests and streams, parks provide critical habitats for local wildlife species and ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, nitrogen removal, stormwater mitigation, and flood prevention.¹ Miles of trails and acres of lush areas provide recreational activities and health benefits for residents of all ages, such as increased physical activity, mental wellbeing, and improved air quality.² Parks are also important to fostering community cohesion and local pride, which are necessary components of increasing resilience in a changing climate.

HB 1358 Is Consistent With State's Commitment to Environmental Justice and Equitable Access:

In June 2022, our state enacted the Great Maryland Outdoors Act to address infrastructure, capacity, and accessibility needs within the Maryland Park Service and State parks³, which were made evident through increased park visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ HB 1358 is one way to continue to deliver on that legislative commitment. In addition, Governor Moore has pledged to further environmental justice and climate resilience⁵, and equitable access to nature is a key component of Maryland's healthy future.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1358.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

¹ "Ecosystem Services." *Maryland Department of Natural Resources*, dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/Pages/Ecosystem-Services.aspx. Accessed 29 Feb. 2024.

² "Park Equity." *Maryland Department of Natural Resources*, dnr.maryland.gov/Pages/ParkEquity.aspx. Accessed 29 Feb. 2024.

³ "Legislation - SB0541. Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act)." *Maryland General Assembly*, mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/sb0541?ys=2022RS. Accessed 29 Feb. 2024.

⁴ Shwe, Elizabeth. "'Great Maryland Outdoors Act' Aims to Bolster State Park System as Demand Grows." *Maryland Matters*, 24 Jan. 2022, www.marylandmatters.org/2022/01/24/great-maryland-outdoors-act-aims-to-bolster-state-park-system-as-demand-grows/.

⁵ WEAA. "Maryland Gov. Wes Moore Unveils \$90m for Environmental Initiatives." *WEAA*, 16 Feb. 2024, www.weaa.org/local-news/2024-02-16/maryland-gov-wes-moore-unveils-90m-for-environmental-initiatives.

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