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Wednesday February 19, 2020

TO: Paul Pinsky, Chair of Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and Committee Members
FROM: Joshua Kurtz, The Nature Conservancy, Policy and Government Relations Director
POSITION: Support SB 460 Environmental Transparency and Accountability Act

The Nature Conservancy supports SB 460 offered by Senator Elfreth. SB 460 creates an Office of Environmental and Natural Resources Ombudsman in the States Attorney Office. The position would facilitate communication between the general public and agencies responsible for environmental and natural resources issues. The Ombudsman would be responsible for disseminating information, through a website about enforcement and compliance issues and actions taken.

The Office of the Ombudsman provides for additional capacity for agencies to process complaints and public requests for information. As climate change impacts increase in Maryland a reporting channel in the Ombudsman's Office will allow for increased information that can be disseminated to the public. The Ombudsman's Office provides an additional channel for concerned Marylanders to reach out about environmental and natural resource concerns.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 460.