



**Senate Bill 142 (Senator Simonaire) – “Natural Resources – Recreational License Donation Program and Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund - Revisions”
Written Testimony**

Position: SUPPORT

Submitted to: House Environment and Transportation Committee

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

This bill

The Chesapeake Bay Trust is honored to play a role in the program outlined in SB142 and administer funds contributed to the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund. Through this process, individuals purchasing boating, fishing, or hunting licenses/registrations can optionally donate to the Fund. The Trust then will distribute the funds through grants to organizations that benefit veterans for projects like recreational and/or therapeutic outdoor activities or green job workforce training.

There is significant research that indicates that being outdoors promotes healing in individuals recovering from physical and mental trauma or health issues. The Trust, through other sources (such as the Chesapeake Bay license plate), has funded many human health-related outdoor therapeutic projects, including healing gardens at hospitals and planting projects for facilities that support individuals with disabilities. Projects specifically focused on veterans we have funded in the past include TALMAR Gardens & Horticultural Therapy's veterans-to-farmers initiative, "Breaking New Ground," a 10-month farmer's training providing the skills for employment in agriculture and Talisman Therapeutic Riding's "Talisman TheraBay Trails" program to support their veterans therapeutic programs and annual Veteran's Victory Garden. This bill provides resources to expand our therapeutic projects that focus specifically on veterans.

About the 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 citizen 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 to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average more than 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$120 million through more than 11,000 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985 to schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups. 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 fourteen years, 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 . Given our emphasis on the human health sector, this legislation directly supports our strategic plan.

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