

House Committee on Environment and Transportation

February 26, 2021

HB1267 SUPPORT

Dear Honorable Chair Kummar Brave and Members of the Environment and transportation Committee

A Brighter Future for Our Children

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to speak about this subject that has captured my attention over the 30 years that I have lived in Maryland. I have been a member of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary all that time, and enjoy the water, something I was never able to do before I moved to Annapolis. Directly and indirectly, because of my membership in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, I have spent hundreds of hours annually on the rivers and creeks of the middle Chesapeake and upper bay and even did a circumnavigation of the Delmarva Peninsula. My observation is that there is little land from which non-property-owners can enjoy the wonderful waters. In fact, there are not enough launch ramps for all the small boats that families use to enjoy the waters. Even the smallest boats (canoes, kayaks, and stand- up paddle boards) have difficulty finding places to launch.

I am also a hiker and birder. Although there are some parks for such activity, I have found that during this pandemic they have been crowded by people seeking a place of respite from the stress of isolation. These parks having been discovered, it is expected that more people will frequent them, and it will become more difficult to find enough space for all who seek respite, especially near the shore.

Sandy Point State Park is a prime example of the lack of shoreline space for all who seek it. The line to get into the park on weekend days are extremely long and many families are turned away, and this long before the pandemic.

All citizens should be able to enjoy the outdoors, have ready access to the shoreline and the waters, and it should be available to all, not just owned by individuals. This problem is now solidified.

But through public trust, either by donation or public purchase, access to parks and the water could be increased such that an afternoon in the park or on the water is not a stress producing activity. That should be a stress reducing activity in a state with as much water and physically friendly shoreline as Maryland.

I am asking that the committee recognize that part of the problem I have described is strictly due to inequity and exacerbates the fact that there are other inequities in our state.

To overcome this inequity, this bill addresses the lack of awareness of the depth of the problem as well as the breadth of its impact. It gets down to collecting the data in an equitable fashion so the legislature can, in the near future, address solutions they develop to overcome this negative aspect of the way we have used the state's shoreline resources.

I ask the committee to move this bill forward for passing by the general assembly.

Respectfully submitted by Thornell Jones