



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 1133

Tree Planting – Urban Trees Program and Commission for the Innovation and Advancement of Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings

Date: February 24, 2021
To: House Environment and Transportation
Committee

Position: **Support**
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Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation **SUPPORTS** HB 1133. This legislation sets a goal for planting 500,000 trees in underserved urban areas, acknowledging the environmental and societal value of trees.

500,000 urban trees are a positive step to addressing stormwater runoff pollution into the Bay

This legislation sets out a goal for the State to plant 500,000 trees in underserved urban areas of the State. The definition of underserved is an urban area as defined by the US Census and one of the following:

- Public housing,
- Neighborhoods that were red-lined;
- Census tracts with high unemployment above state average; or
- Census tracts with median incomes representing 75% of the state average.

Urban areas are Maryland's most intensely developed areas. In these zones, a network of roadways, roofs, paths, and parking lots creates slick "impervious" surfaces that drive rainfall quickly and directly into waterways, carrying nutrient and chemical pollution. Breaking up those smooth pathways with well-positioned leaves and roots will help slow and filter the rainwater. In this was this legislation's 500,000-tree goal may help address stormwater pollution, a rising source of nutrient pollution into the Chesapeake Bay.

Stormwater runoff pollutes streams in underserved communities

Stormwater pollution is an increasing problem for the Chesapeake Bay, yet existing statewide plans largely ignore it. Failure to address stormwater aggravates existing inequalities in our State. While stormwater runoff is an issue for the Bay, it is also an issue for local waterways, and in particular, local waterways in developed areas of the State with a disproportionately high share of disadvantaged residents.

Trees plantings in urban areas will deliver a range of co-benefits

The Climate Solutions Now Act directs that at least 500,000 of the 5 million trees named in the statewide goal should be planted in underserved areas of the State. These trees will be planted through the Chesapeake Bay Trust's partnerships with local neighborhood and community groups who apply for tree plantings.

Tree plantings lessen dangerous urban heat-island effects and filter harmful airborne particulates that are common in urban environments. In areas with more trees, residents have better physical and mental health, improved ability to cope with stress, and increased mental clarity. Social cohesion is stronger in communities with trees.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Bay and its resources.



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An urban tree planting goal incorporates additional equity into State and local tree planting goals

There are at least three current State environmental goals that rely on tree planting. The State's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan, the State's Climate Watershed Implementation Plan, and the State's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan. A robust urban tree planting goal will help the State's progress toward its existing goals and help ensure that the progress is achieved in a way that benefits all communities.

A number of cities and towns in Maryland have urban tree canopy goals. Through additional funding and technical support from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, this legislation will help local communities attain their tree canopy goals. It will also ensure that the trees planted with State funding are planted in underserved areas.

A Commission will help maximize water quality and climate benefits of tree plantings

A Commission with membership from relevant State agencies and relevant stakeholders including the Maryland Association of Counties and Maryland Municipal League, the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities, statewide environmental advocates, the Farm Bureau, the University of Maryland, and the Maryland Forestry Foundation will help guide the tree plantings under this legislation. The Commission for the Innovation and Advancement of Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings will report by October 31, 2022 with a plan for tree planting, including guidelines for plantings to maximize carbon sequestration, mitigate urban heat islands, and improve water and air quality.

Private investment may become a long-term source of funding after State funding expires

HB 1133 makes use of existing environmental funds to support the tree plantings goal. As the State is completing upgrades to its major wastewater treatment plants, there is funding available in the Bay Restoration Fund to support other needed water quality practices. This legislation would dedicate \$10 million per year for eight years to tree plantings in underserved areas. The legislation's Commission will investigate methods for seeking private capital for tree plantings and consider using Water Quality Revolving Loan Funds (WQRLF) to back Environmental Impact Bonds for tree plantings.

The trees will be native species, sustainable, and properly maintained

The 500,000 trees will be native, sustainable species and will be maintained. The legislation's Commission will determine a list of native species for plantings. Using this list, the Chesapeake Bay Trust will work with community and neighborhood organizations who apply for grant funding to determine the types of trees planted. The community will discuss the possibilities, including the tree's height, appearance, and other attributes and requirements for growth. The Chesapeake Bay Trust will include provisions for verification that tree-plantings are being implemented and maintained as planned in the grant agreement with the community group receiving the trees.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1133. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

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