

Testimony of Elly Cowan
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Before the
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 24, 2021

Pertaining To: HB1133, Tree Planting – Urban Trees Program and Commission for the
Innovation and Advancement of Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings

Support

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of smart growth and preservation in Maryland. Through our Smart Growth Maryland program, Preservation Maryland advocates for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns.

SUPPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 1133

Preservation Maryland supports HB 1133 which will go a long way toward reversing inequities in urban tree cover throughout Maryland and will further the establishment of a Maryland-based carbon offset market to support more tree plantings in the future.

Urban trees are proven to be one of the most cost-effective water quality filters, cleaning streams and rivers and creating a healthy environment for marine life. This protects the health and safety of those who swim and fish from local waterways. Trees capture carbon and deliver a host of co-benefits including serving as one natural filters of polluted runoff. Native trees are also especially critical habitat for wildlife throughout the state, including in urban areas. HB1133 seeks to support and encourage both public and private tree planting efforts, focusing on a goal of planting and helping to maintain 500,000 native trees in Maryland's underserved urban areas by 2030.

In addition to the obvious environmental benefits, this legislation can also help Maryland address longstanding inequities. The additional tree coverage resulting from the planting 500,000 trees through HB1133 could help mitigate the urban heat island effect, deliver improved health and mental health outcomes, and increase property values and social connections for underserved urban communities.

This bill would also establish a Commission for the Innovation and Advancement of Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings. It envisions a Commission that will design a tree planting plan to mitigate heat deserts, maximize water quality, air quality, and carbon sequestration. Additionally, the Commission that would draw on existing expertise to develop a plan for establishing a carbon offset market in Maryland. A carbon offset market could help support additional tree plantings by drawing on private investment. A Maryland-based carbon offset market could support additional tree plantings after the expiration of this bill, extending the positive impacts of this legislation well into the future.

Preservation Maryland urges the Committee's favorable report of HB1133.

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