



House Bill 1133 (Delegate Bridges) – Tree Planting – Urban Trees Program and Commission for the Innovation and Advancement of Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings

Written Testimony

Date: February 24, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

Submitted to: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Submitted by: Patricia Hayes-Parker, Executive Director, Central Kenilworth Avenue Revitalization Community Development Corporation (CKAR CDC, Inc.)

Central Kenilworth Avenue Revitalization Community Development Corporation (CKAR CDC) supports the passage of HB 1133. CKAR CDC is a 501c3 non-profit charitable organization headquartered in northern Prince George's County, Maryland. We support passage of this bill because it is aligned with our mission to promote the social, environmental, and economic development of Greater Riverdale. The need is great in our community to add tree cover because of the positive impact trees have on health and wellness, economics and energy reduction, water quality and climate change. Trees are a part of appropriate development.

We have participated in the tree planting programs sponsored by Prince George's Department of the Environment and The Chesapeake Bay Trust for several years beginning in 2017. These organizations supported our tree planting programs through funding and technical expertise allowing CKAR to engage community residents in the importance of increasing tree cover in our communities. CKAR serves a very diverse population of 36,000 residents located inside the Beltway. Many of the homes and apartment dwellings date from the 1960s. Many homeowners have trees that need care and, in some cases, need to be removed. We are replacing them with healthy native species. Most residents need additional tree cover because there are very few trees on their property. Large areas suffer due to the amount of impervious paving in these very dense communities. Greater Riverdale is geographically diverse and ethnically diverse with 55% Hispanic or Latino, 32% black, 9% white and 2% Asian. Ten per cent (10%) of our area's population is below the poverty line; compared to 8% county-wide. The pockets of poverty in our community must be treated with equity.

There are environmental disparities in America's cities today. In 2004 G.C. Gee and Payne-Sturges of Washington, D.C. noted that there are environmental health disparities derived from a framework that integrates psychosocial and environmental concepts.¹ Minority neighborhoods tend to have higher mortality, morbidity and health risk factors compared with white neighborhoods due to environmental conditions that play an important role in producing and maintaining these health disparities.

In 2016, A. Regulon described a complex landscape of inequity in access to urban parks. He states that compared to mostly white communities, communities of color have historically has less access to green spaces – and less access to their physical, social and mental health benefits.² Greenspaces are associated with improved cognitive performance in children.³ Finally, greenery can improve mental health and lower stress.⁴

Our community is an urban suburb with some housing built as early as the 1960s with some historic properties that date from the nineteenth century. Our community has undergone a substantial amount of change including in-fill housing and suburban-type strip shopping centers with large imperviously paved parking lots. A large amount of green space has been removed in our community. Most recently, the Purple Line light rail system will bring more development further decreasing the amount of green space.

Recently, CKAR CDC received national attention for its “Grow Green” tree program from The Starbucks Foundation. They provided support to CKAR in an award through their National Neighborhood Grants program. CKAR has worked over the last five years with several partners that include the Neighborhood Design Center, Prince George's County Department of the Environment and Public Works & Transportation, the UMD School of Landscape Architecture and The Chesapeake Bay Trust. These partnerships have provided CKAR an opportunity to plant over 800 trees in the community, contract each year with a local minority tree company that hires minority employees to plant and mulch the trees, use local nurseries as vendors, engage college students to assist us to reach out and inform the community about the value of trees on their property. We started planting 100 trees per season. Now we are planting 300 trees per season. Property owners are given options for the kind of tree that can be planted. We plant the right tree for the right space for every client.

We urge your support of HB 1133. Thank you for this opportunity to offer these comments. If you need more information, please visit our website (www.ckarcdc.org) or call me at (240) 608-2527 or via email at peparker@ckarcdc.org.

¹Gee, G.C. & Payne-Sturges, D.C. (2004) Environmental health disparities: a framework integrating psychosocial and environmental concepts. *Environmental health perspectives*, 112 (17), 1645-1653.

²Regulon, A. (2016). A complex landscape of inequity in access to urban parks: A literature review. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 153, 160-169.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2016.05.017>

³" Greenspaces have been associated with improved cognitive performance in primary school children" Dadvand, Payam; et al. *Proceeds of the National Academy of Sciences*, May 2015, Vol. 112, No.26. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1503402112.

⁴Access to Green Space, Physical Activity and mental health: A Twin Study" Cohen-Cline, Hannah; Turkheimer, Eric; Duncan, Glen E. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 2015, 69:523-529. Doi: 10.1136/jech-2014-204667.