



A Union of Professionals  
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**Written Testimony Submitted to the  
Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
SB 541 - Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations  
(Great Maryland Outdoors Act)  
February 16, 2022**

**SUPPORT**

Chair Guzzone and members of the committee, on behalf of the more than 20,000 members of the American Federation of Teachers – Maryland (AFT-Maryland), including the Maryland Professional Employees Council (MPEC), which represents the Park Ranger Associates, we ask for a favorable report on SB 541 - Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act).

Park Rangers are and should be recognized as first responders. They are trained for and provide the same types of emergency services as EMTs, police, and fire fighters. Many times, Park Rangers have saved lives due to their level of training and professionalism.

Recognition of their service and training could help fill the large number of vacant positions currently in our state parks. Last year, the Maryland State Park Investment Commission recognized the need for highly qualified personnel to effectively operate the park and visitor services. With current staffing levels, one Park Ranger out on sick leave could mean there are no trained personnel available to operate the park.

Park Rangers are passionate about their work. They keep the parks safe and clean for recreation; promote better mental and physical health; and bring family and friends together in our great outdoors. Park Rangers are stewards of our state's most precious public lands and should be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Again, AFT-Maryland calls for a favorable report for SB 541. Thank you.

Kenya Campbell  
President