



February 14, 2022

SB0541 Great Maryland Outdoors Act
Beth Miller for the Green Towson Alliance
Favorable

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and Honorable Members of the Committee

The Green Towson Alliance (GTA) writes in support of SB0541 Great Maryland Outdoors Act. We are a coalition of environmental advocates who collaborate to achieve environmental goals locally, but we also concern ourselves with broader issues in Baltimore County and the state of Maryland. Baltimore County has several state parks including portions of Patapsco, Gunpowder Falls, North Point State Battlefield, Hart-Miller Island, Soldiers Delight Natural Resource Management Area and Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail. All these outdoor areas have seen substantial increases in usership over the last decade without commensurate increases in budget allocations. The spike in demands on our state parks associated with the COVID 19 pandemic highlights the role our outdoor spaces play in our physical and mental health.

This legislation aligns with our mission for best management of natural spaces. We work on both hands-on projects and educational messaging about the importance of creating trails and parks while protecting the habitat of our local flora and fauna in our backyards and public spaces. This bill has provisions for training and promoting volunteer projects such as ours. Leadership from state investment in parks will serve as a model for local jurisdictions as we advocate with them to provide an equitable distribution of green spaces and trails with rain gardens and other bioretention areas that use habitat boosting native plantings to filter and absorb stormwater.

We concur with the conclusions of the State Park Investment Commission. This legislation addresses those conclusions by increasing funding for staff, access, facility maintenance, better planning and oversight for Maryland state parks. We urge the committee to give a favorable report on SB0541.

Rest

Beth Miller
for the Green Towson Alliance