



Peter Franchot  
*Comptroller*

## TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

### Support - Senate Bill 541 - Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act)

*Budget and Tax Committee*

*February 16, 2022*

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in **support** of **Senate Bill 541 - Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act)**. I would like to thank Senator Elfreth for sponsoring this important legislation, and the Committee for providing the opportunity for my testimony to be heard.

Since 2020 there has been a surge in demand for open space as Maryland residents look for safe recreational areas. This has served to highlight both the intrinsic value of our state's park system, and the maintenance challenges associated with increased visitation. Currently, the state has numerous projects totaling more than \$60 million backlogged due to a lack of funding. During 2020 there were nearly 300 park closures at locations across the state due to capacity limits. For too long, the needs of our parks have been unmet, and Senate Bill 541 seeks to right that wrong with a historic investment in park system capital improvements, infrastructure projects to mitigate climate change, preservation, land acquisition, staffing additions, and more.

Public parks provide a significant benefit available to all Marylanders. Senate Bill 541 would work to address many of the issues with the state park system by instituting recommendations from the State Park Investment Commission, and greatly improving both the quality and availability of park space in Maryland. For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 541. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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