

114 S. Washington St.,
Suite 101
Easton, MD 21601
410-690-4603
FAX 410-690-4604
www.eslc.org



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SB0014: Sustainable Maryland Program Fund - Establishment

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 3, 2022

Owen Bailey, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Favorable

Dear Senators of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy would like to express its support of the MD SB0014 and urge a "YES" vote on the bill to establish the Sustainable Maryland Program Fund. Many of our small towns on the Eastern Shore have benefited from the technical assistance, education, and resources provided by the Sustainable Maryland (SM) program. This bill to expand and enhance SM is a critical step in the state's effort to empower local action and realize statewide environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

Over the past ten years, SM has supported municipal governments across the state of Maryland by providing jurisdictions with a comprehensive suite of policies, resources, direct support, and incentives designed to help municipalities make progress across a broad range of sustainability goals. In addition, SM has helped our communities build a strong network of active citizens committed to expanding the capacity of local governments and improving local-level sustainability throughout the state. This is incredibly important given the limited staff and resources of most small towns. This bill to establish an SM program fund will help codify this statewide effort and ensure local governments have the education, technical assistance, and financial resources necessary to improve quality of life.

As a local community non-profit operating in the upper six counties of the Eastern Shore that is home to several certified municipalities of the SM program, we have seen firsthand the benefits of a dedicated and comprehensive technical assistance program. While other programs may offer specific environmental services, the SM program framework helps provide elected officials, staff, and local Green Teams the education and technical assistance needed to develop their capacity to manage local sustainability issues and take advantage of resources already available.

Not only does SM help to enable our communities to easily navigate other state and local programs, but it also helps them to organize their residents to take action. Through the SM program our small towns have received training and information necessary to communicate the importance of sustainability to their residents, established a plan for

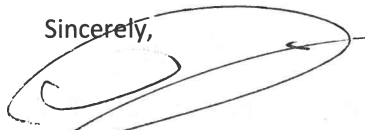


taking action, and increased our overall ability to pursue funding to improve our communities. The SM program has become a primary driver for building community capacity to engage in sustainability projects. By supporting this bill, the state will help to elevate and amplify these efforts. The SM Program Fund will help to replicate and scale Green Teams to other local jurisdictions and provide much needed funding to pursue new innovative community-based projects.

By supporting the SM Program Fund, you honor the state's commitment to support Maryland communities. The current legislation advocates for local governments and helps provide much needed resources for improving the civic infrastructure upon which our communities depend. The state should take this opportunity to expand and support this high performing program in order to increase technical assistance, coordinate local efforts, and encourage more communities to take action.

We urge a favorable report on SB0014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Owen Bailey", enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Owen Bailey

Towns Program Manager