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HB 876

March 30, 2022

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director, Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 876 – Maryland Forestry Education Fund – Establishment

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 876.

HB 876 establishes the Maryland Forestry Education Fund to expand and enhance the Maryland Forestry Foundation's capacity to provide certain education and resources to forest landowners. The bill would further the ability of district forestry boards and the knowledge of local governments to achieve healthy and sustainable forests while allowing businesses to test innovative best management practices in forestry. The fund proposed in HB 876 would support urban forestry, forestry practices healthy forest management, ecological service markets, and emerging forestry threats in relation to climate science among other activities. Annual funding allocated through the bill would be \$250,000.

Trees are essential to healthy, thriving communities, especially for urban environments such as Baltimore City. In the *Trees and Forests* chapter of the city's 2019 Sustainability Plan, Baltimore outlines strategies and actions to advance the city's tree canopy and protect existing trees:

Strategy 1: Plant and establish more trees ensuring equitable planting distribution.

Strategy 2: Assess and manage the city's tree canopy for long-term health.

Strategy 3: Preserve the city's existing tree canopy.

HB 876 goals align with these strategies and could potentially provide critical funding to protect and expand the city's tree canopy, attenuate the urban heat island effect in areas with limited green space and support cleaner air across the greater Baltimore region and the entire state.

The Maryland Forestry Education Fund proposed under HB 876 will provide knowledge and support to forestry boards and local governments, strengthening their ability to promote the protection and sustainable management of local forests and engage communities in forest stewardship. The activities supported by the fund will also help local jurisdictions to incorporate future climate conditions in forest management decisions and develop long-term strategies to promote the health and sustainable management of local forests.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 876.

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