

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and
Transportation Committee
Room 251 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Room 121 House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB0653, Conservation Finance Act of 2022

Dear Chair Barve and Chair McIntosh,

On behalf of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, I would like to express our support for SB 348, the Conservation Finance Act of 2022.

For the last 50 years, the Alliance has brought together communities, companies, and conservationists to restore the lands and waters of the Chesapeake Bay. While public funding has helped moved the needle on restoration progress of the last few decades, it is critically important to attract private capital and financing to the effort, in order to achieve the most equitable and efficient outcomes for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

For the last three years, the Alliance has been working on advancing the topic of conservation financing. In 2019 in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, we facilitated a roundtable discussion on how to bring more private capital investment to the Chesapeake—a discussion attended by many local, state, and federal government officials, private equity firms, and non-profit partners involved in this work. This work resulted in suggestions regarding procurement and other opportunities for Maryland to advance this work at a state level, including opportunities supported in this legislation.

The proposed Conservation Finance Act would put Maryland squarely on the map as a state leading the way in innovative restoration that engages both the public and private sector more deeply in this work. The Alliance is supportive of all efforts to increase the capital available to perform restoration work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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From our perspective, this proposed legislation provides the following opportunities to the state of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay:

- Defines 'blue infrastructure' and puts both blue and green infrastructure on the same footing for state financing as traditional gray infrastructure practices.
- Provides more opportunities for green infrastructure projects such as forest and tree planting by making them eligible for MDE state revolving fund loans, grants, and loan guarantees.
- Helps to accelerate the permitting and installation of green infrastructure projects through the creation of a green infrastructure and restoration commission.
- Expands the ability of many Maryland state agencies to contract for work utilizing Pay for Success contracts that prioritize environmental outcomes as the end result, which helps drive innovation and price reduction of projects.
- Enhances many opportunities for land owners to participate in voluntary carbon markets and amending state laws to enable easier access to these markets.
- Creates a cross-state funding mechanism for watershed and conservation projects in the Pennsylvania portion of the Susquehanna watershed which will assist in accelerating water pollution improvements there.

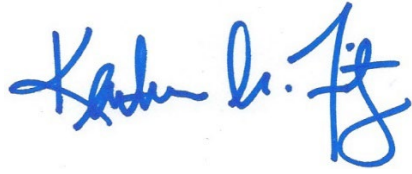
HB0653 represents the first conservation finance legislation in all the states, and would enable Maryland to accelerate conservation and environmental restoration efforts. Thank you for considering this important legislation, and I urge you to support HB0653, Sincerely,

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