



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 531

Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education Grant - Funding and Evaluation - Extension

Date: February 17, 2022
To: Ways and Means

Position: Support
From: Josh Kurtz, Maryland Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 531, which extends funding for the Green Schools Program until 2028. The program provides K-12 students with educational opportunities that empower them to make changes to reduce their environmental impact. Students are encouraged to practice environmental stewardship and live sustainably. They are taught to increase their awareness of how their relationship with the environment ultimately impacts public health and society.

Education of our next generation is critical for continued Bay restoration and long-term protection.

A core tenant of the CBF's work is educating students about the Bay and the broader environment through hands-on learning experiences. The Maryland Green Schools Program has a similar mission of education and is focused on teaching students how to restore the natural environment, protect the Bay, and tackle climate change. The program was created in alignment with the Chesapeake Bay Agreement of 2014. It provides enriching, firsthand, inquiry-based learning for Maryland students across the state.

The extension of the Green Schools program funding will allow for more students to be able to access this extremely popular program.

Currently 42% of all public schools in Maryland hold Green Schools status and nearly 430,000 Maryland students are served by the program.¹ These students are given the opportunity to learn about and participate in several important learning activities including: recycling, habitat restoration and efforts to reduce energy use at their schools. The lessons learned by students in the program can be applied at home and in their communities. The current program has a goal of reaching 50% of all schools across the state and are in 33% (public and private). The extension of the program will provide additional resources to continue the programming and reach the 50% goal.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 531. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney, at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753

¹ Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE), [Maryland Green Schools Progress Evaluation 2021](#), Executive Summary.