

Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis
Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education Grant – 3
Funding and Evaluation – Extension (HB531)
Before the House Ways and Means Committee
On February 17, 2022

To Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

I am proud to introduce (HB531) and I urge members of the committee to support this legislation. Since the enactment of The Maryland Green School Act of 2019, there have been significant efforts to increase the number of green schools throughout the State. The 2019 bill supported the goals set by the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) program to promote environmental education, awareness, and sustainable best practices.

The funding passed in 2019 was intended to help more students gain access to environmental activities, resources, professional development, and experts in the field. However, when the 5-year grant funding was initiated in FY21-22, the program was stifled due to the increasing concerns of the pandemic, falling short of the program’s full potential. This bill will simply extend that grant funding for two years, so the original goal of the 2019 bill can be accomplished.

The Green School Act of 2019 awarded MAEOE grant funding to help reach its goal to certify 50% of Maryland’s schools as Green Schools by 2027. According to Executive Director Laura Johnson Collard, MAEOE has “certified 33% or 664 Maryland Schools and another 340 schools must meet the core objectives that promote systemic environmental education, student action, and community partnerships to meet the goal.”

Passing this bill will ensure that we reach the goal of the Maryland Green School Act and extend support for more students to have access to environmental education, activities, and resources to become change-makers for environmental sustainability, building a new generation of climate-conscious students.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote on HB531.