



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB 531 “Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education Grant – Funding and Evaluation – Extension”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 17, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 531, which would extend through fiscal year 2028 current requirements that the Governor include funding in the State budget for increasing the number of green schools in the State. This bill would also extend through 2029 the annual evaluations that study how funds appropriated under this bill impact the number of green schools in Maryland and evaluate if the number of schools is increasing.

The Green Schools Program, founded in 1999, provides opportunities for Maryland students of all grades to participate in hands-on activities related to water and energy conservation, pollution prevention, habitat restoration, community science, the impacts of the environment on public health, and other environmental literacy issues. These activities increase student awareness of how their individual actions affect their communities and environment. Lessons are reinforced by the practical application of knowledge in their schools and homes. Another benefit is that Maryland Green Schools initiatives can enhance applications for national Green Ribbon School and Eco-Schools USA Certification. Finally, the Green Schools Program fully supports Maryland State Department of Education graduation requirements and standards.

At this moment, 664 Maryland Green Schools constitute only 33% of the over 2,000 public and private schools in the state. Ensuring a steady funding amount is vital to increasing the number of Maryland Green Schools. We urge a favorable report.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.