



Testimony SB383/HB531
House Ways and Means Committee
Position: Support
February 17, 2022

Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair, Delegate Alonzo Washington, Vice Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee

The Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) Strongly urges your support of SB383/HB531 the “Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education Grant - Funding and Evaluation – Extension.”

The Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit education organization that works with members to transform lives at schools and in communities. Our mission statement is a guide for making these transformations: MAEOE encourages, engages and empowers the community to understand, responsibly use, and promote the natural world.

This Bill will provide funding for an additional two years to extend funding and evaluation. COVID-19 has created challenges which have prevented student action projects and field trips from happening both of which are an integral component of the Maryland Green Schools program.

MAEOE’s signature program, Maryland Green Schools is nationally recognized as having significant impact with students and schools. MAEOE manages and operates the Maryland Green Schools program. The Maryland Green Schools program is aligned with Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals. Schools’ participation in the program demonstrates that they are successfully working towards Maryland State Department of Education high school graduation requirements and environmental literacy standards.

In 2020 and 2021 MAEOE was able to offer virtual and a few in person professional learning opportunities. However, our Green Schools applications were down as teachers focused on virtual learning and environmental education and extracurricular activities were put aside.

The MAEOE Maryland Green Schools program transforms lives in ways which have a lasting impact. Student stewardship is a primary outcome of the program. Student introduction to environmental education as a part of the curriculum will prepare every student with the knowledge and skills necessary to responsibly protect and restore their local environment and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Student action gives students an opportunity to make environmental decisions. They have a part in creating or supporting change that improves the local environment. As a part of a Maryland Green School students have opportunities to be a part activities like stream or school grounds clean up, they learn about the journey of trash to the Chesapeake Bay and how they are keeping the trash from the Bay. When they learn to recycle at school, they learn about diverting trash from landfill and reducing costs and environmental impact.

The “*Extension of funding*” will provide resources to aid the expansion of Maryland Green Schools. The extension will provide resources for teacher professional development, transportation to outdoor experiences, or small projects at our schools; resources to understand the impact better through evaluation; and resources to build capacity so that school districts are better supported.

We ask you to pass this Bill to support student stewardship and the increase of Maryland Green Schools in our State. Thank you for your time.

The MAEOE Board of Directors:

Robert Hoyt, Chair