

**SB 923 - FAV - MML.pdf**

Uploaded by: Angelica Bailey Thupari

Position: FAV



Maryland Municipal League  
*The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns*

TESTIMONY

March 30, 2023

**Committee:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Bill:** SB 923 – Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment

**Position:** Support

**Reason for Position:**

The Maryland Municipal League supports SB 923, which creates a Greenspace Equity Program within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). MML applauds the bill's goal of enhancing public health and livability in overburdened and underserved communities through the creation and protection of outdoor spaces, and we appreciate that local governments are eligible grant recipients. Our towns and cities recognize the value of greenspaces and the role they can play in our residents' physical and mental health, but we often don't have sufficient resources to make greenspaces more available and accessible. We've seen similar programs succeed on a local level and we look forward to this expand option for supporting our residents.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that this committee provide SB 923 with a favorable report.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Theresa Kuhns	Chief Executive Officer
Angelica Bailey Thupari, Esq.	Director, Advocacy & Public Affairs
Bill Jorch	Director, Public Policy
Justin Fiore	Manager, Government Relations

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# **SB 923 Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Progr**

Uploaded by: Cait Kerr

Position: FAV

**Thursday, March 30, 2023**

**TO:** Brian Feldman, Chair of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee; Guy Guzzone, Chair of the Budget & Tax Committee; and Committee Members

**FROM:** Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

**POSITION:** Support SB 923 - Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 923 offered by Senator Rosapepe. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

TNC is part of a global effort to preserve the world's remaining wild and near-natural habitats, with the goal of protecting 30 percent of the planet by 2030. SB 923 advances that goal, while prioritizing equity by helping under-funded urban land trusts, community-based nongovernmental organizations, and county and municipal governments to preserve, maintain, and create greenspaces within high-density geographies.

SB 923 seeks to establish a new grant program, the Greenspace Equity Program, which will directly support projects to steward greenspaces in communities across Maryland that have historically been denied investment in and access to these spaces. This grant program will invest in land acquisition, maintenance, and greenspace development projects. It will support a variety of greenspaces, including community gardens and urban farms, parks and trails, woodlands and green networks, and other open gathering spaces. Eligible grant recipients include community land trusts and county and municipal governments. Residents living in urban areas have frequently been sidelined in the decision-making process when it comes to lands in their own community. Abandoned properties have stood vacant for years due to cost barriers to repurposing the land. These grants would enable community leaders and members to access the necessary resources to guide how land parcels within their neighborhoods are used in order to better meet residents' needs.

Air pollutants harm pulmonary and cardiovascular health. Ultrafine sized particulate matter has the ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the circulation system. Nitrogen oxides are major precursors of ground level ozone, which triggers asthma attacks and increases childhood asthma cases. These dangerous health risks disproportionately impact Black and brown communities and low-income neighborhoods. Greenspaces improve local air quality, which can reduce rates of respiratory illnesses. They also reduce the urban heat island effect, thereby decreasing cases of heat-related illnesses and deaths. These spaces provide mental health benefits as well, such as stress recovery and improved mental well-being. Gaining access to greenspaces can significantly benefit community members' physical and mental health and reduce healthcare costs.

Due to high acquisition costs, urban land trusts face financial burdens to conserving greenspace in areas with high population density. The Greenspace Equity Program grants would provide support for urban property acquisition and serve as an invaluable resource to communities for stewarding existing green spaces or creating

greenspace out of previously developed land. Likewise, since the program's funds are flexible and provided directly to local governments and land trusts, the Greenspace Equity Program would provide financial support and decision-making power that will enable communities to create spaces that will improve community health and connectivity.

TNC commends Senator Rosapepe for advancing legislation aimed at advancing urban residents' health, well-being, and influence while also establishing, maintaining, and protecting greenspaces.

**Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 923.**

**SB0923-EEE\_MACo\_SUP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



## **Senate Bill 923**

### *Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
and Budget and Taxation Committees

Date: March 30, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 923. This bill would redirect a segment of state-side Program Open Space (POS) funding to create the Greenspace Equity Program. This program would provide additional resources for counties and other stakeholders to promote equity through greenspaces within their overburdened and underserved communities.

Since POS was first implemented in 1969, the State of Maryland and its counties have been immensely successful in expanding access to public recreation and natural areas. The program has advanced numerous health and economic benefits to Marylanders. The Department of Natural Resources highlights that home values increase faster around parks and protected areas and new businesses prefer communities with healthy environments. Access to active and outdoor venues like these are a central element in our state's "quality of life" proposition.

POS is the critical pillar in how counties fund many of their recreation and preservation programs. Without the local side of POS many county parks departments would be unable to adequately function. SB 923's Greenspace Equity Program seeks to further local preservation and recreation efforts by preserving the local side of POS and allowing access to additional resources from the state share of POS. As the level of government closest to the people, county parks departments remain the best positioned to identify and work to preserve greenspace in the communities we all call home.

Counties fully support the intent of SB 923 and welcome the potential to expand collaborative efforts to reach all Marylanders with active and passive recreation opportunities. For this reason, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 923 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.

**EEE Testimony HB 503 SB 923 - IPC.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jodi Rose

Position: FAV





*Forming Faithful Stewards,  
Caring for Sacred Waters*

PO Box 6791  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Greenspace Equity Program  
Senate Bill 923 / House Bill 503  
FAVORABLE**

March 29, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education Energy & Environment  
Maryland Senate  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan  
Vice Chair, Education Energy & Environment  
Maryland Senate  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Energy & Environment Committee,

On behalf of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, I write to urge your support for the Greenspace Equity Program, SB 923 (and House Bill 503, as amended) to advance this bill favorably from committee.

Global leaders are calling for conserving 50% of Earth's landmass<sup>1</sup> in the fight of our lives: to combat climate change. This bill rightfully focuses on helping under-resourced urban land trusts, nonprofits, and municipalities green and conserve land in high-density areas. As an organization truly committed to environmental justice, this bill is vitally important.

In urban settings it is not unusual for residents to be the last to hear about proposed developments being planned in their neighborhoods. This sidelines them in decision-making in their own community. The Greenspace Equity Program would level the playing field so that community-based organizations and land trusts can have a fighting chance at guiding how parcels in their communities are used. In our 10+ years of working with faith institutions, they often see the vacant lot down the street from the church or the dilapidated building as they walk to synagogue, but the cost to clean up that property is a very real barrier. This bill proposes a new grant source that would enable congregations and other community-based organizations to obtain funds needed to green the sites and protect them in perpetuity through conservation easements.

This is the dream! Imagine new greening projects where there was previously abandoned sites. Think community gardens, open space areas, community woodlands, green networks, parks,

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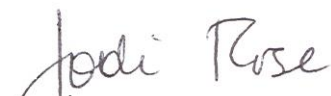
<sup>1</sup> National Geographic, "Half of all land must be kept in a natural state to protect Earth," April 19, 2019.

trails, and urban farms. Eligible grant recipients, including land trusts, nonprofits, and local counties and municipalities, would be able to access badly needed funds to help bring out these projects and restore healing in their communities. Community-based land trusts would further be able to conserve those land spaces in perpetuity, so that the environmental impacts of these projects benefit future generations.

**As people of faith, we are urgently called to address climate change and the threats to vulnerable communities and species.** The Greenspace Equity Program (SB 923 / HB 503) works toward a future where natural areas are valued and protected, biodiversity is recognized as our tool to fight climate change, and money is devoted to community-driven greenspace creation.

Thank you for considering our testimony, and I urge your support for SB 923 / HB 503.

Sincerely,

  
Jodi Rose  
Executive Director

# **FM - SB923 -Greenspace Equity - Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Josh Hastings

Position: FAV



**FOREVER**  
MARYLAND

*Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation*

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Date: March 28, 2023  
Bill Number: **SB 923 (and HB 503) - Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment**  
Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Position: Support

Forever Maryland supports **SB 923 - Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program – Establishment** (and House Bill 503 as amended) for the purpose of providing grants to land trusts or counties and municipalities, to help enhance the public health and livability of overburdened and underserved communities across Maryland.

This bill is the result of years of reflection as to how and where to target conservation investments in order to improve the health of communities and the lands in which they inhabit. Through tools like the Maryland Department of Natural Resources’ Park Equity mapper, it has become much clearer as to where the state could focus conservation and greenspace investment. This bill delivers resources, to targeted areas, to do just that.

Up to 50% of available funds may be used for greenspace acquisition – a direct intended use of Program Open Space funding – and the other 50% is intended to improve and enhance greenspace within a given community. Beginning in FY 2025, the Department of Natural Resources would make available grants that can be utilized for various greenspace purposes, including: community gardens, community parks and woodlands, new trails, urban farms, or other open space uses. Grant amounts can be up to \$5 million in FY25, \$7 million in FY26, and up to \$10 million in FY27 and each year thereafter.

The Greenspace Equity Program will have the ability to advance public health, climate resilience, habitat improvements, and so much more, to communities across the entire state of Maryland. A successful grant will include evidence of support from the local government and the overburdened and/or underserved community in which the project would be located.

We respectfully request a favorable report on SB 923 and ask that it conform to HB 503 as amended and passed by the House of Delegates.

For further information, please contact the organization’s Program and Policy Director, Josh Hastings, at 410-251-5268 or [Josh@ForeverMaryland.org](mailto:Josh@ForeverMaryland.org).

**FOREVER MARYLAND**

2331 Rock Spring Road | Forest Hill, MD 21050 | 443-640-1034 | [www.ForeverMaryland.org](http://www.ForeverMaryland.org)

**sb923- greenspace equity EEE, B&T- 3-30-'23.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lee Hudson

Position: FAV



**Delaware-Maryland Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Testimony Prepared for the  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
and the  
Budget and Taxation Committee  
on  
**Senate Bill 923**  
March 30, 2023  
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairmen and members of the Committees, thank you for the opportunity to testify for care of the gifts of creation. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are a faith community in three judicatories across our State.

Our community addressed concern for a safe, healthy, flourishing environment that can sustain life in “Caring for Creation” (*ELCA, 1993. A healthy environment is also a stated concern of our “Caring for Health,” 2003.*) Stewardship of natural gifts and processes, through conservation and preservation policies, is wise and just because it protects what is for the benefit of all things now living.

And “all things now living” illustrates the need to defend and conserve the web of life. Green spaces are habitat; they sequester carbon; they purify air and water, of noise and other pollutants; they buffer the watershed. A built environment is no surrogate.

We support practicing preservation and conservation in the natural world for the sake of all things now living. “All creatures great and small” (to quote a popular hymn) require the Seventh Day blessing recorded in Genesis 2:3. Preserving natural blessings within a built environment is a proper public policy.

There are biological research projects being conducted within urban contexts. (*The National Zoo is currently sponsoring bird field research in Baltimore City; see [nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/neighborhood-nestwatch](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/neighborhood-nestwatch) and [www.birdsofurbanbaltimore.org/bird-banding](http://www.birdsofurbanbaltimore.org/bird-banding).*) Migratory birds, to cite an example, require greenspaces to successfully complete their seasonal, and obligatory journeys. Raptors such as cooper’s hawks, redtails, merlins, kestrels, and owls, and Baltimore’s famous peregrines, are re-hegemonizing habitat within dense development. And, of course, humans—who have nature in the designation “human nature”—require the space, the green, the nature and the benefits that derive from eco-context. The point of our witness being that human life is biologic with all other life.

So, good public policy in Maryland will conserve and preserve a flourishing nature wherever it occurs. **Senate Bill 923** requires existing funds be directed to a Greenspace Equity Program in contexts where nature has been overlooked, and its benefits compromised.

Our community already advocates environmental protection and remediation for those living within this bill’s definition of “Overburdened Communities.” We enthusiastically do so again by supporting **Senate Bill 923** and urging your favorable report.

Lee Hudson

# **Testimony in Favor of SB 923.pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Wharton

Position: FAV

Testimony in Favor of SB 923 & HB 503

Dear Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I will be short because I know you have a lot on your plates. I am Leslie Wharton, a long-time Maryland resident, and a leader in the Maryland Chapter of Elders Climate Action. I and my Elders Climate Action colleagues strongly support passage of the Greenspace Equity Program, Bill SB 923 with adjustments to conform with HB 503. This bill is essential to preserving Maryland's ecology, by helping to fund greenspace projects like new pocket parks or community gardens in Maryland's underserved communities. I personally have the luxury of living in a greenspace and it makes all the difference for my physical health and mental well-being. All Maryland residents deserve the same.

Thank you,

Leslie Wharton  
4978 Sentinel Drive #501  
Bethesda, Maryland 20816



# **Testimony for SB 923 Greenspace Equity.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lisa Shore

Position: FAV

Lisa Shore  
604 Kent Avenue  
Pasadena, MD 21122  
(443) 562-5792  
March 25, 2023

### **Testimony for SB 923 Greenspace Equity Program – Favorable**

Honorable Senators:

I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 923: Greenspace Equity.

This bill has the potential to have a significant positive impact on communities throughout Maryland. Research shows that safe, engaging public spaces and access to nature improve the health of communities. In addition to providing a place to exercise, parklands help combat loneliness and isolation, increase access to nature’s healing effects, and create stronger communities. The increased use of parks during the COVID 19 pandemic proved their importance to our communities and their value to public health.

Underserved communities were particularly affected by the pandemic for many reasons – a significant contributing factor was a lack of green space. I urge you to vote favorably for this bill so that all residents can enjoy the quality of life that makes Maryland a special place to live.

#### References:

National Recreation and Parks Association. Fact Sheet on Parks and Mental Health:  
<https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/9c491783f73a45f89abb0443b1a3e977/parks-improved-mental-health-quality-life.pdf> National Recreation and Parks Association 2237 Belmont Ridge Road Ashburn, VA 20148-4501

Klinenberg, Eric. 2018. Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life. Crown Books.

**SB 923 CBF FAV E&T.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## **Senate Bill 923**

Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program – Establishment

Date: March 30, 2023

Position: **Favorable**

To: Education, Energy & The Environment Committee  
Budget & Taxation Committee

From: Matt Stegman  
Maryland Staff Attorney

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 923 which establishes a “Greenspace Equity Program”. This legislation would permit annual state funding to land trusts, local governments and other community partners working in Maryland’s underserved and overburdened communities where the public need for greenspace is often greatest.

In addition to the health and well-being benefits green spaces confer on residents of older urban neighborhoods, nature and green spaces have proven environmental benefits. Green spaces aid in abating air pollution, mitigating heat desert effects, reduce stormwater loads, and can help communities be more resilient against the impacts of climate change.

Often with a higher cost to acquire, urban land trusts face an added financial burden to conserving greenspace in areas of larger population density. In addition to supporting property acquisition, SB 923’s grant program would be an invaluable resource to communities maintaining existing green spaces or creating greenspace out of previously developed land. Additionally, SB 923 provides discretionary grant funding in a flexible way that offers underserved and overburdened communities enhanced self-determination in their greener future.

**CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 923.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*

**HB 503 Rachel Toker Testimony.3.29.2023\_FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Toker

Position: FAV



March 29, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Maryland State Senate  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan  
Vice Chair, Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Maryland State Senate  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB 503 / SB 923 – Greenspace Equity Program - Favorable**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

**Introduction**

My name is Rachel Toker, and I respectfully submit this testimony on behalf of Urban Ecosystem Restorations (UER), a nonprofit urban land trust working in the down-county suburbs of Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, where I serve as the President & CEO. UER’s target region is the National Capital Region (or “DMV”), but UER has been most active in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties in the past few years. I am also writing on behalf of myself, as a voting resident of Montgomery County, where I have lived for more than 20 years.

**Support for HB503/SB923**

I am voicing my strong support for, and I urge you to support, Senate Bill 923 (Greenspace Equity Program), as well as the companion bill, House Bill 503. We ask that the Senate conform Senate Bill 923 to House Bill 503 as amended and passed by the House of Delegates.

**Urban Space Needs Greenspace**

Research across all sectors – academia, industry, government, and nonprofit – is showing that high quality greenspace (particularly what UER calls [Eco-Functioning Space](#)) must expand in urban areas if these communities are to remain healthy and thrive into the future. Research is also showing that, as urban areas expand, our natural ecosystems need connected corridors of green infrastructure and habitat to run through these same urban regions in order to remain intact and functioning. See <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/why-connectivity-matters-to-wildlife-and-people>.

## Access to “Nearby Nature” and Human Health

Increasing bodies of evidence are showing that people of all ages need to interact with, and connect to, nature to maintain healthy lifestyles. Numerous stakeholders, including government agencies, environmental nonprofits, landscape architects, educators, public and mental health advocates, and park advocates, have started to study and design programs that use repetitive and frequent human-nature connections to positively affect human health. Hansen et al. (2017) have collected research findings demonstrating nature’s therapeutic effects on: (1) immune system function, (2) cardiovascular system function, (2) respiratory system function, (4) depression and anxiety, and (5) mental relaxation, attentional, and related disorders (including ADHD) (citations below). We are also seeing evidence of the need for people to be near natural green spaces in order to adapt to negative effects of climate change, particularly to manage flooding and urban heat island effects. For example, tree canopy plays a major role in the dissolution or creation of urban heat islands. Trees can help with heat by providing shade and releasing moisture into the atmosphere. Increased tree planting and green space development are major drivers of heat resilience. **A new Montgomery County study shows how heat resilience and urban green space are not equitably distributed and how heat islands map to intensively developed and low-income urban areas.** <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/389babe7ce654fdd87701488ae72e8b6>.

## Urban Nature and Ecosystem Health

Urban nature is also essential for our regional natural ecosystems to remain healthy. See, e.g., <https://hudson.dnr.cals.cornell.edu/conservation-planning/inventory-and-planning/connectivity-planning>. Without connected corridors of habitat and green infrastructure, our isolated parks cannot support our native and migratory species. We must enable large, protected natural areas to connect into integrated ecological frameworks in order to maintain biodiversity and critical mass of native flora and fauna – and this requires greenways through urban areas across the State.

A recent study shows that Maryland’s policies have not yet incorporated this crucial concept from science. It reveals substantial loss of greenspace and tree canopy in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties. See <https://agmr.umd.edu/technical-study-changes-forest-cover-and-tree-canopy-maryland>:

*At regional and county scales, patterns of forest change vary widely, and some concerning trends continue. Counties in central Maryland with rapid development and population growth experienced greater rates of loss, especially loss associated with development. While forest levels as a whole are stabilizing, continued urbanization is fragmenting forests and encouraging spread of invasive species.*

## Greenspace Quality

It is extremely important to recognize that, while the amount of greenspace should be equitably distributed, the quality of that greenspace is as important. Paved open spaces or greenspaces that are bare patches of grass -- or worse, infested with invasive species – are not contributing to the overall health of the regional ecosystem and they are often not contributing to the health of the local community either. Often, invasive species can actually limit access to a greenspace – particularly when dense and thorny. Therefore, funding for restoration and maintenance of

greenspaces (which is very hard to come by) is fundamentally important, particularly for overburdened urban areas that have been neglected and often suffer such infestations.

### Lack of Local Funding Support

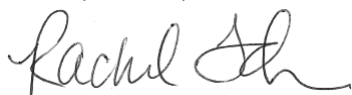
As a land trust working with local communities to partner with nature for their own health and the health of our planet, I see firsthand the funding shortage for these efforts. There are few grant funding sources available to restore, protect, and maintain urban greenspaces – particularly for those that are co-created with these local communities and sit outside of the public parks system. Without grant funds targeted for these purposes (in addition to the limited funding available from stormwater management grants for nature-based solutions), we cannot scale up our efforts. We have lost so many opportunities to protect precious greenspace because of this lack of funding. In fact, UER is working with a landowner in Prince George’s County’s Riverdale Park to create a community nature play space for children in surrounding neighborhoods, but we cannot identify a source of seed funding that would enable us to leverage additional funds so that we can implement the simple design and maintain the space over time.

In fall of 2021, UER, together with a coalition of 17 other community groups working across Montgomery County, called upon the Montgomery County Council to develop targets in its new general plan to increase equitably distributed green infrastructure as a public priority across the County, and to do so in concert with the County’s Climate Action Plan. Yet, Montgomery County chose not to do so, and it continues to be conservative about committing to specific metrics by which it will increase green infrastructure and natural areas in its towns, cities, and urban unincorporated areas. We believe this is in part because of funding concerns. Prince George’s County also has not created robust plans with specific targets for expansion of natural green infrastructure (for purposes beyond stormwater management) across its urban areas either.

### Closing

As we invest in the protection of greenspace statewide, we need to be sure that we are investing in all communities – especially urban and low-income areas. That’s why this bill is so important. The funding support potentially offered by this legislation would provide a major step forward for those of us “on the ground” who seek to increase these essential greenspaces in underserved areas -- in the communities that need it most. I urge you to issue a favorable report on this legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Rachel Toker  
President & CEO



## Relevant Citations

- Haahtela, T., Alenius, H., Lehtimäki, J., Sinkkonen, A., Fyhrquist, N., Hyöty, H., Ruokolainen, L., & Mäkelä, M. J. (2021). Immunological resilience and biodiversity for prevention of allergic diseases and asthma. *Allergy*, 76(12), 3613–3626. <https://doi.org/10.1111/all.14895>
- Hansen, M. M., Jones, R., & Tocchini, K. (2017). Shinrin-Yoku (Forest Bathing) and Nature Therapy: A State-of-the-Art Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(8), 851. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080851>
- Heat Exposure and Cardiovascular Health: A Summary for Health Departments. (n.d.). 32.
- *Improving Health and Wellness through Access to Nature*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/08/09/18/improving-health-and-wellness-through-access-to-nature>
- *IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions*. (2019, July 18). IUCN. <https://www.iucn.org/theme/ecosystem-management/our-work/iucn-global-standard-nature-based-solutions>
- *Outside Our Doors, The Nature Conservancy*. [https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/Outside\\_Our\\_Doors\\_report.pdf](https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/Outside_Our_Doors_report.pdf)

**SRLT GSE Testimony.senate.3.27.2023.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Knebel

Position: FAV



SCENIC RIVERS LAND TRUST  
PROTECTING ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY'S LAND AND WATER

Date: March 29, 2023  
Bill Number: **SB 923 (and HB 503) - Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment**  
Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Position: Support

Scenic Rivers Land Trust supports the Greenspace Equity Program (SB 923/HB 503 as amended). The goal of this bill is to provide grants to land trusts, NGOs, counties, and municipalities to protect and maintain green space in underserved and overburdened communities throughout Maryland.

Saving the environment begins with saving the land. With the Biden administration's ambitious goal to preserve 30% of U.S. lands by 2030, and many world leaders pushing for an even more lofty goal of 50% of land preserved, it is now more crucial than ever to protect the earth's remaining natural lands and support efforts to advance these goals. This bill will not only support these goals, but do so in a way that is inclusive of underserved and overburdened communities.

Although climate change impacts everyone, it does so unequally. Those in underserved communities are disproportionately feeling its effects, and our efforts to address climate change must account for these discrepancies. Due to a history of insufficient investment in these communities, not only have they become uniquely vulnerable to climate change effects such as rising temperatures and more intense storm events, but they have a disproportionate lack of access to nature and green spaces. This bill promises to address these inequalities and target resources to underserved communities, providing greenspace and curbing the magnitude of climate change effects in these areas.

Scenic Rivers Land Trust serves Anne Arundel County with its mission of working with landowners and other partners to protect natural and scenic areas. Our northern most service area encompasses areas that are densely populated but have little greenspace available. We are excited that this new funding source can conserve and provide stewardship of greenspaces in the communities that need it most.

We know what needs to be done to address climate change and reduce its effects – what we lack is resources. This bill will help us have the resources we need to guarantee a livable environment. The Greenspace Equity Program (SB923/HB 503 as amended) is a necessary step toward ensuring the long-term environmental sustainability for the future of Maryland, and we respectfully request your support.

Sincerely,

Sarah Knebel  
Executive Director

**SB0923\_DNR\_SWA\_EEE\_3-30-23.pdf**

Uploaded by: Emily Wilson

Position: FWA



Wes Moore, Governor  
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor  
Josh Kurtz, Secretary  
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

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March 30, 2023

**BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 923 – First Reader**

**SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity Program – Establishment**

**DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

**EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION**

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The Department administers Program Open Space Local, the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program, and the Baltimore City Direct Grant Program which provide grants to local governments for open space and recreation projects including projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace in overburdened and underserved communities. SB 923 establishes the Greenspace Equity Program which would provide grants to a county or municipality, or land trust or nongovernmental organization located or working in an overburdened or underserved community.

The Department continues to work with local governments to address park equity statewide. The Greenspace Equity Program would be another tool to accomplish this. The Department is supportive of the goals of SB 923 and would recommend amendments consistent with the third reader of HB 503 to ensure the Department can administer the program efficiently and effectively, and that the greenspace acquired or developed with a grant through this program will remain publicly accessible. Additional staff will be needed to administer the program.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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The Department administers several land preservation and recreation programs primarily funded with transfer tax revenue. The Greenspace Equity Program is to be funded from the state share of Program Open Space which also funds the Rural Legacy Program, the Heritage Areas Authority, the Baltimore City Direct Grant, DNR’s Capital Development Programs (Critical Maintenance, the Natural Resources Development Fund, POS Public Access), and the Ocean City Beach Replenishment Program. The remaining funds are appropriated to Program Open Space Stateside to preserve natural areas for public recreation and watershed and wildlife protection across Maryland through fee simple and conservation easement acquisitions. Transfer tax revenues can fluctuate greatly and if they decrease, there may not be sufficient funding for all the programs listed above.

**BILL EXPLANATION**

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SB 923 establishes a new Greenspace Equity Program administered by the Department to provide grants to eligible applicants to implement projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace.

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