

Date: March 30, 2023

Bill: HB 503 and SB 923 – Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment

Position: Favorable

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Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for House Bill 503 as amended and passed by the House of Delegates and asks that Senate Bill 923 conforms to HB503. The legislation would establish the Greenspace Equity Program, a grant program and targeted funding mechanisms that support the stewardship of vital greenspaces that benefit overburdened or underserved communities.

The Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is a synergistic collaboration between the Maryland Port Administration (who also own the property), Living Classrooms Foundation, National Aquarium, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Together, these partners ensure nearby underserved and overburdened communities have access to 70 acres of water, 52 acres of restored wetlands, three miles of walking trails, a LEED rated education center, and a fishing pier. In 2013, Masonville Cove was designated as the nation's first urban wildlife refuge partnership by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Masonville Cove, South Baltimore

The mission of the Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is to inspire all people to explore, discover and respect nature, growing the next generation of environmental stewards. Since its inception in 2009, Masonville Cove partners have engaged thousands of community members, students, and volunteers through year-round programming and events such as monthly educational programs (i.e. First Thursdays), Latino Conservation Day, Project Clean Stream, Nature for Kids, Urban Wildlife Conservation Day, and more. Masonville Cove is also home to Baltimore City's only known pair of nesting bald eagles, which have returned in 2023.

Masonville Cove is one example of existing greenspace that could be enhanced and more accessible if this legislation is enacted. A Greenspace Equity Program will advance public health, increase climate resilience, and provide benefits to communities throughout Maryland.

Thank you for your work on this important issue. **We urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report on House Bill 503 as amended and passed by the House of Delegates and ask that Senate Bill 923 conforms to HB503.**

Contact:

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