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Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places

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March 29, 2023

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

The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Vice Chair, Education, Energy and the
Environment Committee
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 on Education, Energy and the Environment,

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I would like offer our strong support for HB 503 / SB 923, the proposed “Greenspace Equity Program.”

Thanks to Program Open Space, Maryland is a national leader on land conservation and the protection of open space for the benefit of people and nature. However, many communities across the state, particularly those that are underserved or overburdened, lack sufficient greenspace. The lack of greenspace in communities has negative implications for public health, for local economies, and for community well-being.

Local governments, land trusts and non-profits have worked creatively, and often with very scarce resources, to meet this problem by acquiring and conserving land for pocket parks, urban farms, community gardens and other greenspaces. However, the current and future need for greenspace far exceeds the resources that these partners can deploy.

It's time for Maryland to increase its conservation investments in Maryland's underserved and overburdened communities, so that we can advance toward greenspace equity across the state. We support HB 503, and SB 923 amended to conform to HB 503 as passed by the House of Delegates.

Thank you for considering our testimony, and I hope that you will work to advance and pass this important legislation in the 2023 General Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joel Dunn".

Joel Dunn
President and CEO
Chesapeake Conservancy