



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