



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB 503

March 30, 2023

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: HB-503 – Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment
POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 503.

The bill appropriates \$5, \$7 and \$10 million in 2025, 2026 and in 2027 (plus each following fiscal years), respectively to the Greenspace Equity Fund it establishes. Greenspace is defined to include community gardens, green networks, parks, trails, urban farms, woodlands, and open spaces, per the bill language. The Greenspace Equity Fund established would be to ‘...enhance the public the public health and livability of overburdened communities...’ protecting, creating and preserving community greenspace.

A board would also be established under this legislation to inform the allocation of the greenspace funds to overburdened communities. Board representation would include state, county and municipal representatives, plus members from overburdened communities.

The goals of this bill align well with strategies and actions outlined in Baltimore City's 2019 Sustainability Plan to:

- People & Nature – Strategy 1: Increase community connections to nature. Ensure it is done in culturally competent ways with early and frequent engagement.
- People & Nature – Strategy 3: Improve and grow our natural systems and support increased management of them by residents, communities, organizations, and city government.
- Nature for Nature's Sake – Strategy 1: Increase restoration, creation, and maintenance of habitat for native species on public and private land; ensure it is done in culturally competent ways with early and frequent engagement.
- Nature for Nature's Sake – Strategy 3: Increase the acreage of maintained and protected land.

For the above reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report for HB 503.