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March 30, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

We are writing in strong support of **HB0503** on behalf of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, a coalition of seventeen Waterkeepers working to make the waters of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays swimmable and fishable, and on behalf of our Fair Farms Initiative. We support the establishment of the Greenspace Equity Program and the funding for the creation and preservation of green spaces to overburdened and underserved communities that lack access to them. Green spaces in communities are an effective method for improving the health and well-being of residents, particularly in older urban neighborhoods. Historically, segregation and redlining of predominantly Black and low-income neighborhoods impeded the planning of green spaces such as community parks and street trees. In a 2018 report by the USDA and US Forest Service, access to greenspaces and forests was found to reduce pollution, increase active lifestyles, improve mental health, reduce stress, and build social and equitable communities.

The Greenspace Equity Program established by **HB0503** would allow for new green space projects to take place on previously abandoned sites, opening opportunities to build community gardens, open space areas, parks, trails, and urban farms. Eligible grant recipients include community land trusts, local NGOs, and county and municipal governments. The funding provided by the Greenspace Equity Program 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.

For these reasons stated above, we urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB0503**.

Sincerely,

**Waterkeepers Chesapeake and partnering farmers signed below:**

Doug Adams  
New Brooklyn Farms  
Mt. Rainer, MD

Ibrafall (Bryan) Wright  
Strength to Love 2 Farm  
Baltimore, MD