

February 13, 2023

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

On behalf of NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, I write to urge your support for the Greenspace Equity Program (HB 503) to advance this bill favorably from committee.

NeighborSpace is a land trust that works to enhance the livability of communities inside the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line by protecting and improving land for small parks, gardens, trails and natural areas. Given the nature and history of urban sites, simply preserving them is not enough. In order for the land to improve the environmental, social and economic factors that affect a community's quality of life, NeighborSpace most often needs to acquire the lot in-fee, after which we restore and steward it through a process that is community-driven and iterative. This is time-intensive and costly.

NeighborSpace currently conserves 21 sites around the County for a total of 99 acres. With the funds that this bill would provide, NeighborSpace could conserve more land and provide access to open space in more communities. Just as importantly, these funds would allow us to better steward the lands we conserve and make a bigger impact on the air and water quality in our service area.

The Urban Greenspace Equity Program (HB 503) is a necessary step toward ensuring the long term environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing of the communities in Maryland that need it most, and we strongly urge your support.

Sincerely,



Phyllis Joris
Executive Director