



SCENIC RIVERS LAND TRUST  
PROTECTING ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY'S LAND AND WATER

February 14, 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

RE: HB 503 Greenspace Equity Program: Favorable – With Amendments

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

On behalf of Scenic Rivers Land Trust (ACLT), I write to urge your support for the Greenspace Equity Program (HB 503) to advance this bill favorably from committee.

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 prioritizes environmental justice, and thus it has Scenic Rivers Land Trust support.

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 also seen a disproportionate lack of access to nature and green spaces. The Greenspace Equity Program promises to address these inequalities and target resources to underserved communities, providing access to 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 of this new funding source that can conserve and provide stewardship of greenspaces in the communities that need it most.

I want to implore that due to the funding source being Program Open Space, that the properties being acquired or stewarded by this Green Equity Program must be conserved by a conservation mission-driven organization (likely a land trust or government agency). This needs to be clarified in the bill.

We know what needs to be done to address climate change and reduce its effects for future generations, and we have the tools to do so. The question remains whether or not we use the tools at our disposal to guarantee a livable environment. The Greenspace Equity Program (HB 503) is a necessary step toward ensuring the **long term** environmental sustainability for the future of Maryland, and we strongly urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah Knebel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Sarah Knebel  
Executive Director  
Scenic Rivers Land Trust