



**Maryland Office**  
Patterson Park Audubon Ctr  
2901 E. Baltimore St  
Baltimore, MD 21214

February 15, 2023

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

**From:** Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

**Subject:** Favorable Testimony for Maryland **HB 503 (Greenspace Equity Program)**

Good afternoon,

My name is Jim Brown, and I am the policy director for Audubon Mid-Atlantic, located in Maryland. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic enthusiastically supports **HB 503** because it provides annual state funding to support projects—led by land trusts, local governments, and community partners—that will increase and enhance greenspace in Maryland’s historically underserved and overburdened communities. Specifically, this bill will create a greener Maryland, which is good news for both birds and people. As we know, communities that have access to greenspace experience better public health outcomes, increased opportunity for physical activity, mental well-being, and community gathering.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and habitat fragmentation:

- 1/3 of eastern forest bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years.
- Land clearing for urban expansion is a big threat to this habitat, and about 35 million birds have been lost since 1970 (about a 15 percent loss).
- 20% of avian species worldwide can be found in cities. When natural spaces are replaced by buildings and impermeable surfaces like roads and parking lots, birds and other wildlife lose valuable habitat.

This bill will benefit both birds and people in Maryland as it levels the playing field for equitable access to open space, bringing the social and ecological benefits of public green space to communities across the state.

**The Greenspace Equity Program** would allow for new greening projects to take place on previously abandoned sites, opening opportunities to build community gardens, open space areas, community woodlands, green networks, parks, trails, and urban farms. More greenspaces mean more robust habitats for resident and migratory birds, and provides landscape diversity that is critical for birds to nest, rest, breed, and feed. Taking action to improve habitat delivers a cascade of benefits that improve climate resilience and quality of life for people.

**HB 503** directs funds toward community-led projects to address environmental challenges by preserving greenspaces, while also supporting Maryland's underserved and overburdened ecosystems. Conserving greenspaces provides healthy, natural habitat for birds and other types of wildlife.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Jim Brown  
Policy Director  
Audubon Mid-Atlantic