



February 15, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 503- Support

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition strongly support HB 503- "Natural Resources- Greenspace Equity Program- Establishment" and urge a favorable report. This legislation would provide annual state funding to land trusts and other community partners working in Maryland's underserved and overburdened communities where the public need for greenspace is often the greatest.

Greenspaces in cities are a simple and effective tool for improving the health and well-being of residents and the livability of older urban neighborhoods, many of which were designed without regard for greenspace access and have faced disinvestment, compounding environmental and health inequities. Proven health benefits from nature and greenspaces include promoting an active lifestyle, abating air pollution, and reducing rates of anxiety and depression. Greenspaces also help mitigate the heat island effect and reduce stormwater loads, enhancing resilience to climate change in urban neighborhoods. HB 503's grant program would be an invaluable resource to communities so they could maintain existing greenspaces or acquire new greenspace.

For these reasons, the undersigned organizations **strongly support House Bill 503** and urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Nature Forward
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Scenic Rivers Land Trust